



# Rubaboo – A Métis Cabaret

## Enrichment Guide

Provided by the Citadel Theatre;  
augmented and edited by Ksenia Broda-Milian for Royal MTC.

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Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Inninewak, Anishinewak, Dakota Oyate, and Denesuline, and the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, acknowledge the responsibilities of the Treaties, and embrace the opportunity to partner with Indigenous communities in spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.

## The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

**Arrive Early:** Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

**Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices:** Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player/gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

**Talking During the Performance:** Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

**Food/Drinks:** Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

**Dress:** There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre or block the view of those behind you. Please do not wear strong scents like perfume or body spray. We thank all patrons for their cooperation.

**Leaving During the Performance:** If you leave the theatre, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

**Being Asked to Leave:** The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

**Talkbacks:** A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

**Enjoy the show:** Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

## About the Show Creator

**Andrea Menard** is an accomplished Métis singer/songwriter, actor, speaker, wellness trainer, and the founder of the Sacred Feminine Learning Lodge. She was recently honoured with the “Métis Artist of the Year” award at the Summer Solstice Indigenous Music Awards.

A 15-time music award winner, and was named ACTRA National’s Woman of the Year for 2021. She has released 5 award-winning albums, including her latest Michif language album, a symphony show, 2 theatrical **cabarets**, including her latest hit show, *Rubaboo*, 2 television performance specials, and her TEDx talk called “Silent No More” has reached almost 200,000 views. Andrea has performed for royalty, prime ministers, governor-generals, residential school survivors, families of **the missing and murdered Indigenous women**, and even sang her song “Peace” to the world’s NATO generals.

Born in Manitoba, Andrea is a proud member of the Métis Nation of Canada. Her Métis family originates from St. Laurent, Manitoba, but settled in the interlakes region of Treaty 2 territory. She carries the name *Skooteah Equahh*, which means Fire Woman in *Anishinaabemowin* and the *Nêhiyawêwin* name *Notigwew Yutin*, which means Grandmother Wind. These names deeply inform Andrea’s work.



### What was the seed of inspiration for creating *Rubaboo*?

It was called forth by Dennis Garnhum who was the Artistic Director of the Grand Theatre at the time. It was during lockdown [when theatres were shut down to prevent the spread of COVID-19] and he was wondering how to open his new small stage after renovations. He asked me if I had a theatrical concert or musical play that I might want an audience. I lied and said I did when I clearly had nothing. But as a creative person, I know something would come.

So I began scripting something. Ideas came, and songs came.

### In your creative process what comes first? The music or the text?

The prayer comes first. I make a point of connecting with my Ancestors in the Spirit Realm, and letting them know I am working on songs, scripts, etc. and need their help. I believe that all my great ideas come from the Spirit Realm, and I am just lucky enough to “catch” them as they are whispered to me.

Once the prayer is set in motion, I listen for answers. That is the most important part. Listening. Then melodies, words, ideas come flowing towards me in an easy manner.

### What is your favourite part of the process when creating new work?

Listening for the ideas. I’m so often pleasantly surprised by what comes out of me. I trust in my Ancestors so completely that my relationship with them is joyful and easy. And I don’t pretend that I’m the writing genius in this equation! Haha!

See the entire creative team and cast for Royal MTC’s production, including their biographies, [on our website](#), where you can also download the Ovation program.

## Content Overview

### **This section may contain spoilers.**

There are mentions of darker times and concepts, but they are not dwelled on; mention of alcohol and alcoholism, death of animals, reference to “the mounties coming with a noose” as punishment for hunting, discussion of residential schools and impacts of abuse – not explicit – in a memorial song. Overall the tone is that of storytelling, without depiction of any distressing events. Occasional crude language.

## Plot Summary

Derived from the Michif word for “leftovers stew” or “big pot,” *Rubaboo* will take audiences on an intimate, moving, and joyous journey—guided by powerhouse Métis performer Andrea Menard. An acclaimed singer-songwriter and actor, Menard’s lyrical voice and masterful storytelling will envelop you in the beauty of Métis culture. Featuring the sounds of drums and guitar, this grand musical feast includes songs of reconciliation, unity, love, frustration, and resilience.

## Song List

**Musical numbers are listed in order of appearance in the production. Songs from the soundtrack are available at <https://andreamenard.bandcamp.com>**

*Four Directions Prayer* – Andrea Menard, Robert Walsh

*Gather Round* – Andrea Menard, Robert Walsh

*Ayn Feu Shansoon* – Andrea Menard

*This Spark* – Andrea Menard, Robert Walsh

*Memmere’s Rubaboo* – Andrea Menard, Robert Walsh

*Riel’s Prayer* – Andrea Menard

*Return of the Bell of Batoche* – Andrea Menard, Robert Walsh

*Nipi Nigamoonis* – Andrea Menard

*Water Prayer Song* – Andrea Menard

*L’espoir* – Robert Walsh

*Ramant Iii Riviere* – Andrea Menard

*Where is God in this Place* – Andrea Menard, Robert Walsh

*Silent No More* – Andrea Menard, Robert Walsh

*The Kraken/Red River Jig* – Karen Shepherd/traditional

*Weesahkoteweenowuk* – Andrea Menard

*Mother Nature Gives* – Andrea Menard, Robert Walsh

*Mahican Kita Oyoo* – Andrea Menard

*Chi Meegwech* – Andrea Menard

*Sparkle* – Andrea Menard, Robert Walsh

## Context and Related Resources

### Being Métis

We asked Manitoba theatre artist Charlene Van Buekenhout what being Métis means to her. While her experiences and history are not necessarily the same as Andrea Menard's, she shares that it is an important part of her identity, and explains some of the history in our province.

#### I am Red River Métis

*By Charlene Van Buekenhout*

Taanshi Kiyawaaw! How are you everyone!

Charlene D'ishnakaashon, my name is Charlene and I'm Belgian on my father's side, and Métis on my mother's. I was born and raised on Treaty 2 territory in Dauphin, Manitoba, home of Canada's National Ukrainian Festival. Ni-wikiinaan Winnipeg Treaty 1 avik mon mari pi not fiyinaan. Now I live in Treaty 1, Winnipeg, with my husband and our daughter. This is where my parents are from. Some of the language you are seeing in this introduction is Southern Michif. It is one of the unique Michif languages developed by the Michif people, and one of the many languages spoken by the Michif (Métis in French) people throughout the homelands.

Métis / Michif people were created on this land when European fur traders came to Turtle Island and "met up" (had babies) with First Nations people. My sister always says "the Métis people are lovers." We are born of the union between two people from different cultures, who came together and found a way to communicate and create a connection...and this "connection" ended up creating a whole new people!

Two of my ancestors were a Scottish fur trader and an Ojibwe woman who lived in the early 1800s. Luckily we have the Scotsman's diary, and in it he talks about love getting "the better of his reason" while living with the Anishinaabek. We hope that the love between the two was mutual because the Scotsman and the Anishinaabekwe had children: one was a daughter, Helen Ann Cameron. This child of mixed heritage grew up and found someone just like her, with a father from across the ocean, and a mother from the land we live on. They married, and they lived with both cultures providing guidance. They found others. They grew communities because of their shared ties to this new identity. They had children, and then so on, and so forth (until me, and my daughter!).

These families came together and shaped their own culture and way of living separate from those of their European and First Nations parents. These people became the Michif people, Otipemisiwak, "the people who rule themselves". The Michif people took what they needed from both cultures, and created a new one. Their ability to live "in between" the worlds of the Europeans and the First Nations further developed and defined their unique identity, and within this, culture emerged. Have you ever seen Highland dancing from Scotland? I was a Highland dancer in my youth, and when I started Métis Jigging, I noticed that the fancy steps in jigging were so like Highland dance, but with even more bouncing! Métis jigging is like a simile for the Michif people: a coming together of First Nations Powwow dancing, and Highland dance (among other stepdances) which births a new dance, with its own music and steps and rules. You can still see the initial influences, but it has developed beyond them into a dance iconically its own, iconically Métis.

Similarly, during the fur trade, these new people were able to use skills inherited from both European and First Nation cultures and develop them further, making the Michif highly sought-after interpreters, translators, suppliers, guides, couriers, diplomats and more. I see us Michifs using our strengths as bridges, creating connections.

And hey, we invented the Red River Cart! A vehicle to connect Métis to one another, especially to follow the Buffalo Hunts. The organization of these hunts has defined the Métis people (see PDF on The Buffalo Hunt in resources) and these rules and laws in regard to how to organize a hunt came in handy when having to quickly organize for any number of reasons, one of which we will see shortly.

Around 1869, some not so great things started to happen. At this point it is impossible to talk about Michif people without involving politics. Our identity is so shaped by what happens here. In 1867 Canada became a thing, but Manitoba wasn't part of it. Manitoba wasn't a thing, but the Red River Settlement was. "Canada" (John A. MacDonald and friends) wanted to "buy" up the land and squeeze everyone (Métis, First Nations) out. So, Louis Riel (and posse) quickly formed a National Committee, forcing "Canada" to negotiate with them (you know, so they could retain their rights, homes, etc). This was the beginning of the Red River Resistance, which was a movement opposing the sneaky, illegal, and offensive land theft of a visiting government which did not own the land. This is why we don't call it a rebellion anymore. The people were not rebelling against an existing government: no such government existed. They were resisting (trying to prevent) the unlawful installment of a government which did not have their best interests in mind.

Well, in 1870 more stuff happened. Manitoba entered into Confederation ("Manitoba Day," May 12th) and Louis Riel fled to the U.S to hide out (after the execution of Thomas Scott). He became an American citizen (and this is important come 1885), and Manitoba became a Province of Canada, founded on the Métis "list of rights." Approximately 1200 Canadian soldiers called the RREF (Red River Expeditionary Force) – precursors of the RCMP, headed by Garnet Wolseley – were sent to "pacify the region" (the region being the Red River Settlement). They began murdering, raping, and assaulting Métis men, women, and children. Acts of arson and other brutalities were committed, forcing some Métis people to head west. This "Reign of Terror" lasted about 3 years.

The "list of rights" that Louis Riel and the provisional government negotiated for the Red River Settlement, the Métis, and First Nations people, was "loop-holed", or blatantly disregarded, and almost none of it was honoured. The Métis were edged off their land by settlers, who just started living there because they were given these lands by Canada. This was unacceptable (and so illegal), and so the Métis wanted Louis Riel to come back and petition on their behalf (because, like, what gives, John A?!). In 1884, four Métis men went to Montana to get him, including my ancestor Michel Dumas! Canada replied "We will meet this petition with bullets". So Louis and friends formed a Provisional Government. Other notable Métis in this government were Gabriel Dumont as General, and my ancestor Charles Nolin as Commissioner.

Bullets came. The battle of Batoche, the Battle of Duck Lake...things went up and then down quickly, and Louis Riel was executed for High Treason – illegally executed, for many reasons. For one, he was a naturalized American Citizen at the time. For another, the law used to justify the execution was a British medieval law from the 1300s which no one used anymore. [Please see the next section of this guide for further details on these historical events.]

1885. There's no Louis Riel and things got really bad for the Métis (yes, if possible, worse). Nobody wanted us: not European enough and not First Nations enough, for the government or the Crown. We got NO land ANYWHERE. So began, from 1885-1960, the Road Allowance period of our history. What's a Road Allowance? It's the ditch. It's the land between the road and someone else's land. That little bit. Unused Crown land.

The Métis, the Michif people, rebuilt their communities: they unified and came together. Eventually, around the mid-1930s, the government stepped in and forced them off of any place they settled. Setting their homes on fire. Killing their animals. Destroying their livelihood.

It was dangerous to be Métis. During the Road Allowance period, if you could become invisible, this was preferable to being Métis. If you could look and pass as French, you did. For survival. My Grandmother was born in 1925. This would have been a great time to hide your identity, hide who you are and make the transition to being French Canadian. I believe my Great-Grandmother did this for her family. So my Grandmother's children (my mom) grew up thinking they were French, their Métis identity lost to them.

My mom told me once that my daughter needed a 'Katyn'. I asked her what that was, and she looked at me funny and said "you should know, you went through French immersion: it's French for 'doll'!". As a former French immersion student I at least could tell her that that definitely wasn't the French word for 'doll'. I was learning Southern Michif at the time, and was able to find out that 'Katyn' is a Heritage Michif, Southern Michif or Michif Cree word for 'doll'.

My mom also tells me she remembers, when she was a kid, they'd sometimes push all the furniture to the wall, and people would come over with fiddles, guitars, accordions and there would be a party! When she hears that Métis fiddle she says "Oh that's the fiddle sound I like, that's what I grew up with". It sounds to me like culture can reach out from where it's been hidden. It can reach beyond the hurt, the trauma: it can reach through generations, and light our way forward. That is its power.

When I think about my Métis identity, who I am as a Métis person, and what this means to me, I think about my role in Métis history. My role as a conduit for culture and language, my role in returning a sense of pride in being Michif to my family. I grew up fairly privileged, with land to live on, easy food and water: the only trauma I experienced were the hair perms I continually put myself and my hairdresser through. I think about how becoming invisible allowed for the privilege I enjoy. I accept that this privilege, and survival, brings feelings of guilt and shame. So I think about my role as a Michif. I know it is important for me to be active in remembering our history. I place these stories within my family, to make the invisible visible, to let my ancestors know that they will

not be forgotten and that I am here to make sure they are not erased. That my Métis self, my daughter, our unique culture, language, and our identity are visible. And that identity is the spark that ignites the pride that glows within us and lights our path forward. That they, the past and the present Métis, will be seen.

I found the following quote from the Manitoba Métis Federation's website. It doesn't say when or where Louis Riel said this, but it is something I can imagine him saying as our people were struggling. It is a plea to not forget, to accept the good with the bad, to hold the people who went through troubled times in our hearts in hope that the youth, our future Métis will know who they are: The people who own themselves, the free people, the Métis.

"We must cherish our inheritance. We must preserve our nationality for the youth of our future. The story should be written down to pass on." - Louis Riel  
Ekoshi.

**Related Resource Links:** Rosie Darling gives a [simple video introduction to The Métis People](#) (4:22); explore the [Michif language](#); see a [timeline of Métis history](#) and learn about the [Red River Buffalo Hunt](#) in documents from the Gabriel Dumont Institute; be inspired by [Louis Riel's words](#) and delve deeper into his life through [Riel's biography](#) as well as learn why his trial was unjust in an [excerpt from \*The Trial of Louis Riel\*](#); dive into a [report on the Red Sky Métis Independent Nation](#) for detailed history.

The Winnipeg Free Press published a 3-part series on the Red River Resistance in 2020. Available with a free membership. [Part 1](#) [Part 2](#) [Part 3](#)

## **More Métis History: The North-West Resistance and Battle of Batoche**

*Adapted from the Citadel Theatre*

The North-West Resistance took place from March to May 1885 in what is now Alberta and Saskatchewan. Métis and First Nations allies were resisting against settlers and the federal government. The government won. Hundreds died. Many Indigenous people lost everything and the leader of the Métis, Louis Riel, was executed.

The Plains Indigenous Peoples and the Métis had a very difficult life on the Prairies for decades: the bison were gone, many were starving, and treaties with Ottawa left them with little land. The Métis thought that new settlers would be supported by the government in taking more land. In the fall of 1884, Louis Riel wrote a "Revolutionary Bill of Rights." The 10 Rights included the right of Métis to have their own land and farms, the right to have provincial legislatures with Métis representation, and for Métis customs to be respected. The Métis created a provisional government in the small town of Batoche on March 18 with Riel as president. Soon after, a battle took place at Duck Lake. The Métis and their First Nations allies fought against the North-West Mounted Police who lost that battle. In response, Ottawa created an army and sent 5,000 soldiers to the Northwest.



At the same time, some Cree and Assiniboine people went to Fort Battleford. On March 30, two settlers were killed. On April 2, a small group of Cree killed 9 men, including Indian agent Thomas Quinn and two priests. Chief Mistahimaskwa (Big Bear) had tried to stop the violence. The rebels/resistance fighters fought two major battles with the soldiers sent by Ottawa, winning the first at Fish Creek on 24 April. The second battle took place at Batoche between May 9 and 12. The federal troops won and their victory ended the North-West Resistance.

A series of trials took place. Many Métis and First Nations leaders were charged with treason. Most were sent to prison. Some were executed, including Louis Riel. Riel's execution was extremely controversial; many in English Canada thought he was a traitor but the Métis thought he was a hero. They and many in French Canada were extremely angry. The hanging of Riel contributed to the struggles between English and French Canada for many years to come. The defeat in the North-West Resistance contributed to the further deterioration of the Métis and Indigenous communities for many years to come as well.

## **Savouring our Stories: Food and Métis Cultural Resilience**

*Written by Danielle LaRose, Métis Theatre Artist*

*with support from Elder Jo-Ann Saddleback and Dreamspeakers Festival Society's Christine Frederick, producers of the Rubaboo Arts Festival; via the Citadel Theatre.*

All around the world, there's one thing that's always guaranteed to bring people together- FOOD! From the most extravagant holiday dishes to the simplest daily fare, food has a special place at the heart of every culture. We all need it to live, but our universal love of food stems not only from its ability to nourish and sustain our bodies. Food is essential in nourishing and sustaining our communities as well, and no matter where we're from or where we travel to, Food has something to teach us about connection, gratitude, and reciprocity. On these lands, we call it *wahkohtowin*- a nehiyawewin word for our circle of connection where we show gratitude for the gifts we've been given by sharing them with all our relations. One of the ways we seek to live in *wahkohtowin* is in the mindful harvesting, the careful preparation, and generous sharing of food.

We often hear people refer to Food as their "love language", and it's true that when we feed someone, we express a wholistic care for them; a care for their spirit and wellbeing as well as a care for their bodily health. What's better than someone bringing you a hot bowl of soup when you're sick or making your favourite dish for your birthday? Even if it's not exactly the way **kookum** made it, even if it's store-bought, we still feel that warmth of connection because someone has taken the time to listen, to remember the little things that bring us joy, and to nurture our relationship.

Food teaches us how to express our love for one another, but the first love that Food taught us about was the love of the Land for the People. Every time we sit down to eat, we're enjoying the life-giving gifts of the Land, the Water, and our plant and animal relatives. Every meal is an opportunity to show gratitude for these gifts.

This connection between food and Land can teach us a lot about other nations and cultures. You can learn a lot about a people by exploring their foods as most cultural dishes are in direct relationship with the Land – what grows there, what animals live there, the season cycles, the heat of the sun and the minerals in the soil and the flow of the waters. Across Turtle Island, the land shifts and changes drastically, and so do the foods, the people, the stories and traditions. On the west coast, Salmon is essential to the prosperity of the people. There are many stories about how the Salmon has cared for them, and how they must care for the Salmon in return. In the Great Lakes regions, they plant the Three Sisters- Beans, Squash, and Corn- and from those plant relatives, the people learn how to work together in prosperity.

For the Métis, it was *lii bufloo* (the Buffalo in our Michif language) who were our most beloved teachers. Lii bufloo didn't just give us food, clothing, tools, shelter, and everything we needed to sustain ourselves. They taught us who we were; who we could become. From our Voyageur Grandfathers, the Métis inherited a wanderlust and a love of adventure and living on the land. Already accustomed to travelling long distances in the days of the fur trade, it made perfect sense to continue that life of movement and follow the herds of lii bufloo across thousands of prairie miles. This seasonal travelling also allowed us to nurture our connections with the families of our First Nations Grandmothers, visiting kin across the plains and maintaining those essential relationships. Lii bufloo taught us how to define ourselves as a unique post-contact Indigenous people and the Laws of the Hunt continue to inform Métis self-governance today. It was lii bufloo that showed the Métis our place in the circle and how we could contribute our unique gifts and experiences towards the prosperity of all our relations.

Lii bufloo were so much more than just food, yet it was our reliance on them as a food source that made them a target. If food is a cultural "love language", our way of maintaining care and connection with one another, then the best way to suppress a group of people and extinguish their relationship with the Land is to simply eliminate that food source. As the buffalo herds were killed en masse and without conscience, it wasn't just individual Indigenous bodies that starved as a result. Entire cultures starved as hunting practices were outlawed and traditions were suppressed, threatening our connections to each other and to the Land. It is with great sadness that we reflect on the loss of lii bufloo as their decline heralded a long period of darkness, poverty, and disconnection for the Métis and many Indigenous peoples. As lii bufloo disappeared, so did our relationships, our traditions, our stories, our languages- or so it seemed.

Despite the hardships they faced, the Métis turned to food to preserve the culture for future generations. They knew they would have to work together through this period of scarcity, and so they relied on simple dishes like Rubaboo: a stew made with the last of the root vegetables and what little meat you were able to trap during the winter months -usually small animals like *wapus* (rabbit in nahiyawewin). Rubaboo was cheap to make and hearty enough to feed our large families. The flexibility of the recipe also meant that anyone showing up for dinner could bring something to add to the pot, enriching the meal as well as the company. By continuing to care for one another through survival foods like Rubaboo, Métis people fought to maintain our connections. It was around these tables, sharing food, that hushed voices told the stories, sang the songs, and spoke the language. We owe so much to those old ones that continued to share our traditions in

secret and kept our culture alive through those dark times. They taught us that Food, no matter how scarce, is resilient. And so are we.

At any Métis gathering, you will often see an extra place setting at the dinner table. This is an invitation for the ancestors to come share the feast with us. Even when our relatives depart this world for the next, we maintain our relationships and connection with them through food. It reminds us that our ancestors are always with us and that it's thanks to them that we're able to gather and celebrate our culture today. After all, Food has memory. It creates a place where we can remember and be remembered; a place where our stories are told and retold. Our matriarchs in particular understand the importance of food as memory. Their love for us is preserved in recipes passed down, traditions maintained, kinship savoured for future generations. These are often cultural dishes and while they may remind us of holidays and celebrations spent together, they also remind us of our cultural roots, of the People and the Lands where we come from.

Rubaboo isn't a fancy dish. It's a survival food made to see us through the harshest winters of our lives. And yet, this humble stew serves up a rich record of Métis history simply because it was always made to be shared. In our Michif language we say *pihtikwe kiyawâw* - Come in and sit down, everyone.

"The feast is ready, gather round. We give thanks for the bounty as we pass it along. And place an extra setting as we sing this song" – *Rubaboo*

**Related Resource Links:** The [Virtual Métis Museum](#) has a wealth of resources including a [document on traditional foods and preparation](#).

### **The Four Elements and Medicine Wheel**

"I'm gonna gather all these Elements, our Relatives, In a Circle. And gather some more Relatives. Like the four directions, like my ancestors, my Mémères, because there's no Rubaboo without the Métis matriarchs." –Andrea, *Rubaboo*

The medicine wheel is a significant symbol in many Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island. It represents the interconnectedness of all life and the cyclical nature of existence. It is typically depicted as a circle divided into four sections, each representing a different aspect of life. Typically depicted as a circle divided into four quadrants, the medicine wheel reflects balance and harmony. Often the four directions – north, south, east, west – are partnered with different elements, seasons, colours, animals, sacred medicines, and stages of life, each working together to support the well-being of individuals and community. There is no one "correct" medicine wheel. When Elder Francis Whiskeyjack from Saddle Lake, AB speaks of the Medicine Wheel and its four elements, he describes the directions used in the wheel in a clockwise direction because that is the way the sun moves, rises and sets. "The number four has many significant meanings... Within the four directions there are all the sacred teachings of four... There are four winds; four seasons; four types of creatures that breathe—Those that fly, (birds), those that are four-legged (the buffalo), those that are two-legged (humans) and those that crawl (insects)."

In *Rubaboo*, Andrea Menard uses the four elements of fire, water, wind, and earth as a structure for the play. **Fire** is used to call upon the power of the Métis people in referencing events like the Riel Resistance and the Return of the Bell of Batoche, challenging the assumption that the Métis were “rebels” when in fact they were reacting to continued Canadian expansionism moving further West, which put their farms and river-lots at risk.

**Water** represents the capacity we all have for healing, and the hope that exists for a possible reconciliation of nations. **Wind** evokes the ritual of smudging, and honours those lost to colonial violence and residential schools, while also calling for “winds of change” to right these wrongs. Finally, **Earth** reminds us that we all come from Mother Earth, and we need to be grateful for this gift of life. By combining all the elements, a metaphorical pot of Rubaboo is created by the end of the play, and we find ourselves in “The Circle”, where we are all equal and we all belong, in unity.

**Related Resource Links:** View an [Anishinaabe teaching](#) and a [Cree teaching](#), or watch a [medicine wheel teaching video](#) (24 minutes).

## The Sharing Circle

*Adapted from the Citadel Theatre*

“We’re gonna sit together in a circle so we can see each other. Clearly. I want you to see me. As an Indigenous woman, I want to be visible. But I want to see you too.” –Andrea, *Rubaboo*

The circle influences how many Indigenous people view the world. That is, how all things are connected. Balance relies on this connection and without balance, health is compromised. Life is viewed as a circle or a cycle. The sun, the moon, the seasons, the journey of our lives from birth to death. Circles are a natural way to walk your path and conduct your life and align with the fundamentals of the natural world.

Indigenous ways of knowing use and interpret the circle in many different ways, but with the same good intentions. The circle is whole and doesn't end; the circle can be unbalanced depending on what is in it or not in it. But in general, a circle is impartial, fair and representative of interconnectivity and equality.

Sharing circles have been a staple of many Indigenous cultures for centuries, providing a space for individuals to come together, share their experiences, and connect with each other. In recent years, sharing circles have gained popularity as a tool for personal growth and community building, and they have been adapted to fit the needs of a variety of communities and organizations.

A sharing circle is a facilitated gathering where participants sit in a circle and take turns sharing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to a specific topic. It is a safe and supportive environment where participants can be vulnerable with others. The power of sharing circles lies in the opportunity for participants to connect with each other on a deeper level. Participants can gain a better understanding of each other, build relationships, and offer support. Sharing circles also provide a space for personal growth and healing, as participants are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and to gain insight into their thoughts and feelings.

## Glossary and Mentions

These words and concepts appear in the text of the show as well as throughout this guide.

Align – supporting or agreeing with another person, organization, or view.

Bell of Batoche – A bell was seized from Batoche's church as a trophy of war by federal troops who put down the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, crushing the dream of Métis leader Louis Riel to build an independent Métis state.

Colonial Violence – Colonialism is the act of power and domination of one nation, by acquiring or maintaining full or partial political control over another sovereign nation, often enacted by violent methods.

Diagram – a symbolic representation of information using visualization techniques.

Expansionism – the policy of territorial or economic expansion; acquiring more physical space or power.

Indigenous – the descendants of the earliest known inhabitants of a territory. There are three categories of Indigenous peoples in Canada: Inuit, Métis and First Nations.

Interconnectivity – things that are related to each other connecting in different ways.

Kookum – Cree word for Grandmother.

Medicine Wheel – an ancient and sacred symbol used by many Indigenous cultures in North America. Different nations have different medicine wheel teachings, according to their stories, values, and beliefs.

Métis – A distinctive peoples; in s. 35 of the Constitution Act 1982, the term does not encompass all individuals with mixed Indigenous and European heritage. They are the descendants of French fur traders and First Nations women, dating back to days of the Red River Settlement in Manitoba.

Michif – The Métis language.

Mother Earth – a personification of nature that focuses on the life-giving and nurturing aspects of nature by embodying it, in the form of the mother.

Rebels – those who renounce and resist authority (as referenced here, the authority of one's government).

Reconciliation – In Canada, the process of reconciliation is tied to the federal government's relationship with Indigenous peoples. The term has come to describe attempts made by individuals and institutions to raise awareness about colonization and its ongoing effects on Indigenous peoples.

Residential Schools – government-sponsored religious schools that were established to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture.

Riel Resistance – an armed resistance movement by the Métis under Louis Riel and an associated uprising by First Nations Cree and Assiniboine of the District of Saskatchewan.

**Related Resource Links:** For more on the specifics of Métis people and Residential Schools, read [an article in the Canadian Encyclopedia](#) or a [writeup by the Métis National Council](#). The Rupertsland Institute has created an [interactive educational resource of survivor experiences](#) in this context.

## Discussion and Writing Prompts

### Pre-Show

- *Rubaboo* is not a piece of musical theatre, but a cabaret. How might music be used in a theatrical piece that is not a traditional musical?
- What elements of Métis culture are you already familiar with?

### Post-Show

- How did this theatre piece reflect the definition of rubaboo?
- Did anything surprise you about this show?
- Did any parts of the play resonate with you or relate to your own life?
- Did you learn anything new about an Indigenous culture? What and how?
- What elements or aspects of this work are different than conventional ways of practicing theatre?
- How was music used in this performance?
- Why do you think Andrea Menard chose this format for this content? What was successful about it?
- What do you think is the intended message of this show? What did you take away from the experience?
- How did the designs of set, costumes, and/or lighting reflect the themes of this show? Think about shape, colour, symbolism, and any other connections that you see.
  - The set is covered in artwork by Leah Marie Dorion, a Métis artist. How does this add to the overall look and meaning of the show? (Imagine the shapes of the set in solid colours, for example; what difference does that make?)
- Menard has said that she based the structure of this piece on the four elements, earth, wind, fire, and water. How do you see that reflected in the show?
- Reviews have praised *Rubaboo* as being a way to share the Métis perspective without being a “didactic history lesson” and that it brings joy and delight through song and dark humour. Do you think this is an effective way of educating? Did it resonate with you?  
(<https://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/theatre/review-rubaboo>)
  - Are there other films, theatre pieces, or other types of performance that use similar techniques to get a point across? Compare and contrast.

## Suggested Classroom Activities

**Métis Role Models:** Research a Métis person and create a report, presentation, or poster about them. This can be someone “exceptional” who has excelled in their field, like a prizewinning athlete, or someone you know through family or community – everyone can be worth celebrating!

The artist whose works adorn the set design is named **Leah Marie Dorion**. [Leah’s website features many of her works.](#)

**Visual Art Response:** Responding and reacting to artwork a common practice in the field of the visual arts. Arts organizations, curators, and art critics often share their written responses to various artworks in diverse mediums. These are published in newspapers, journals, and magazines. Pretend you are hired to write a visual art response to one of the following artworks

made by Leah Marie Dorian:

[Choose an image from the exhibition “Country Wives & Daughters of the Country: Métis Women of This Land”](#) (scroll down for gallery and click to enlarge)

[Moon Cycle Birds](#)

[Four Winds Turtle](#)

[Singing to the Aspen](#)

Leah suggests these five questions to help you get started:

- What is your response to title of this artwork? Is the title appropriate, why or why not?
- Describe your emotional reaction to this artwork.
- What First Nations or Métis symbols/items/worldviews are featured in this artwork?
- How do you react to the color choices and techniques selected by the artist?
- If you could ask the person in the painting a question what would you ask?

**Related Resource Links:** [Leah’s website includes a page on symbolism](#) featuring some of the symbols she often uses in her art and what they mean according to her teachings.

**Creative Writing Art Response:** Try composing a short story based on one of the following paintings. Read the artist statement or description to inspire the development of your story. Make sure you have a basic structure in your story such as an introduction, body, and conclusion.

[Essay and images from 13 Moons Exhibition](#)

[Da Vic Gallery has several of Leah’s paintings](#) along with descriptions by the artist

[Scroll down on this page to find “Thought Woman”](#) and its artist statement

**Many cultural organizations have lesson plans and activities available. Here are some:**

**Métis Gathering:** A collaboration between Canadian Geographic and Métis Nation Saskatchewan, you can find lessons for grades 1-12 in Michif, beading, geography, music and dance, and perhaps of particular interest related to *Rubaboo*, traditional foods and harvesting.

**Rupertsland Institute** has lesson plans for early, middle, and senior years on the knowledge themes of language, culture and traditions, homeland history, and governance.

**For younger students,** check out [activity sheets from Otipemisiwak Métis Government](#).

**Learning Bird** provides a cross-curricular resource kit for grades 6 to 12, covering Indigenous studies, social studies, English, and social justice subjects. All seven resources in this kit center Métis perspectives and take learners on a journey exploring the history of the Métis and Louis Riel. [See the Louis Riel, Red River Resistance, and Beyond collection of lessons here.](#)

**The Resilience Project** is a resource created by MAWA (Mentoring Artists for Women’s Art) here in Winnipeg. It features Indigenous art cards with accompanying lesson plans. The cards are available for purchase, and the teaching guide is free.

[Refer to page 19-20 of the teaching guide](#) to introduce learners to Christi Belcourt. [Belcourt’s virtual gallery](#) will lead to discoveries of the importance of Métis beading as a vital community tradition and intergenerational activity for self-reflection and meditation.



Share Belcourt's painting *This Painting is a Mirror* and explain her technique of transforming beadwork into painting: every dot represents a bead. Consider asking learners the following questions:

- What materials and techniques did Christi use to make this painting?
- List the plants and animals you recognize in the painting (i.e., bees, blue jays, hummingbirds, moths, robins, blueberries, strawberries, oak leaves, poppies, roses, chokecherries, bunchberry flowers).
- What do you think the plants and animals represent in this painting?
- What can you infer about the meaning of the painting from the artwork's title?

MAWA also includes suggestions of artistic response activities in their guide, such as emulating beadwork patterns with stickers or dot painting along with a YouTube lesson.

## Curriculum Connections

Attending Royal MTC's production of *This Play* and discussing it or participating in some of the suggested or similar activities, will fit into Manitoba curricula in the following subjects:

### Manitoba English Curriculum

([https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/framework/full\\_doc.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/framework/full_doc.pdf))

As the English Curriculum in Manitoba is in flux, we have not designated SLO numbers to these outcomes, but they all show up in both the 2000 curriculum and the most recent drafts of the new curriculum.

- research and study topics and ideas
- interpret and integrate information and ideas from multiple texts and sources
- manage information and ideas
- recognize and analyze inequities, viewpoints, and bias in texts and ideas
- become aware of the ways that one engages with text
- recognize, apply and adapt rules and conventions

### Social Studies

**Grade 4 Social Studies** Cluster 2: Living in Canada (KC-004, KC-004A, KE-049); Cluster 3: Living in Manitoba (KI-006A, KI-007, KI-007A, KI-009, KL-024); Cluster 4: History of Manitoba (KI-010, KI-011A, KI-027, KI-033, KI-034)

**Grade 5 Social Studies** Cluster 1: First Peoples; Cluster 2: Early European Colonization (KH-026, KE-051); Cluster 3: The Fur Trade; Cluster 4: From British Colony to Confederation (KC-002, KI-012, KL-023)

**Grade 6 Social Studies** Cluster 1: Building a Nation (KC-002, KI-007, KH-027, KH-028, KH-029, KH-032); Cluster 3: Shaping Contemporary Canada (KI-014); Cluster 4: Canada Today (KC-005, KI-016, KI-019, KI-020A, KI-021, KL-026A)

**Grade 7 Social Studies** Cluster 4: Human Impact in Europe or the Americas (KL-028, KH-031)

**Grade 8 Social Studies** Cluster 1: Understanding Societies Past and Present

**Grade 9 Social Studies** Cluster 1: Diversity and Pluaralism in Canada; Cluster 4: Opportunities and Challenges



**Grade 10 Geographic Issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century** Cluster 2: Natural Resources (10-KI-004)

**Grade 11 History**

Cluster 1: First Peoples and Nouvelle-France (1.1, 1.2, 1.3)

Cluster 2: British North America (2.2)

Cluster 3: Becoming a Sovereign Nation (3.1, 3.3)

Cluster 5: Defining Contemporary Canada (5.1, 5.3)

**Grade 12 Global Issues** Areas of Inquiry: Environment; Poverty, Wealth, and Power; Indigenous Peoples; Oppression and Genocide; Gender and Identity; Social Justice and Human Rights.

**Grade 12 Current Topics in FNMI Studies** All clusters, particularly SLO 1.1, 1.2, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1.

**Drama**

**Early/Middle Years**

- DR-C1 The learner experiences and develops an awareness of people and practices from various times, places, social groups, and cultures.
- DR-C2 The learner experiences and develops an awareness of a variety of dramatic forms, styles, and traditions.
- DR-C3 The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of the dramatic arts in the lives of individuals and communities.
- DR-R1 The learner generates initial reactions to dramatic arts experiences.
- DR-R2 The learner observes and describes dramatic arts experiences.
- DR-R3 The learner analyzes and interprets dramatic arts experiences.
- DR-R4 The learner constructs meaning and applies new understandings from dramatic arts experiences.

**Senior Years**

- DR-R1 The learner generates initial reactions to drama/theatre experiences.
- DR-R2 The learner critically observes and describes drama/theatre experiences.
- DR-R3 The learner analyzes and interprets drama/ theatre experiences.
- DR-C1 The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.
- DR-C2 The learner experiences and develops an awareness of a variety of dramatic forms, styles, and traditions.
- DR-C3 The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of the dramatic arts

**Music**

**Early/Middle Years**

- M-C1 The learner experiences and develops an awareness of people and practices from various times, places, social groups, and cultures.
- M-C3 The learner experiences and develops an awareness of a variety of music genres, styles, and traditions.

M–C3	The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of music in the lives of individuals and communities.
M–R1	The learner generates initial reactions to music experiences.
M–R2	The learner listens to, observes, and describes music experiences.
M–R3	The learner analyzes and interprets music experiences.
M–R4	The learner constructs meaning and applies new understandings from music experiences.

### **Senior Years**

M–C1	The learner develops understandings about people and practices in music.
M–C2	The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of music.
M–C3	The learner develops understandings about the roles, purposes, and meanings of music in the lives of individuals and communities.
M–R1	The learner generates initial reactions to music experiences.
M–R2	The learner critically listens to, observes, and describes music experiences.
M–R3	The learner analyzes and interprets music experiences.

### **Visual Arts**

#### **Early/Middle Years**

VA–M2	The learner demonstrates an understanding of and a facility with visual arts media, tools, and processes.
VA–C1	The learner experiences and develops an awareness of artists and artworks from various times, places, social groups, and cultures.
VA–C2	The learner experiences and develops an awareness of a variety of art forms, styles, and traditions.
VA–C3	The learner demonstrates an understanding of the roles, purposes, and meanings of the visual arts in the lives of individuals and in communities.
VA–R2	The learner observes and describes art experiences.
VA–R3	The learner analyzes and interprets art experiences.
VA–R4	The learner constructs meaning and applies new understandings from art experiences.

### **Senior Years**

VA–M1	The learner develops competencies for using elements and principles of artistic design in a variety of contexts.
VA–C2	The learner develops competencies for using visual art media, tools, techniques, and processes in a variety of contexts.
VA–C1	The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the visual arts.
VA–C2	The learner develops understandings about the influence and impact of the visual arts.
VA–C3	The learner demonstrates an understanding of the roles, purposes, and meanings of the visual arts.
VA–R2	The learner observes and describes art experiences.
VA–R3	The learner analyzes and interprets art experiences.

VA–R4      The learner constructs meaning and applies new understandings from art experiences.

## Sources

<https://artsclub.com/education/pdfs/student-matinees/teacher-resource-guide-rubaboo.pdf>  
<https://citadeltheatre.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/RUBABOO-ENRICHMENT-GUIDE.pdf>  
<https://learningbird.com/celebrating-metis-week-in-your-classroom/>  
<https://resilienceproject.ca/en/artists>  
<http://christibelcourt.com/>  
<https://www.leahdorion.ca/index.html>  
<https://guides.library.ualberta.ca/first-nations-metis-inuit-contexts-in-education/lesson-plans>  
<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/framework/english/index.html>

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