

I – La Montagne Tortue (traditional)

La Montagne Tortue ka-itohtânân
En charrette kawîtapasonân
Les soulier moux kakiskênân
La viande pilee kamîcinân
L'écorce de boulet Kamisâhonan

We are going to Turtle Mountains
We are going in a cart.
We wear moccasins
We eat pemmican (a kind of bison jerky)
We wipe our assess with birch bark

II - Anthem for the Plains

by Jean Teillet ©

The Métis were a migratory people who followed the buffalo, which they called "living for the chase". They sang long songs while they travelled. Their records speak often of their love of this life, how beautiful the land was, and how they cherished the plains. They called the plains "the storehouse of the good god".

Listen as we sing of the land we love
As we sing our love of the plains
We sing of wind and the sea of grass
We sing of the land and our storied past.

Sing loud and long our song of the plains
Where we dance and laugh and cry
The plains are made of our bones and blood
It's here that we live and die.

Listen as we sing of the land we love
As we sing our love of the plains
We sing of the view and the stars that fall
We sing of the land where our dreams stand tall.

Sing loud and long our song of the plains
Where we dance and laugh and cry
The plains are made of our bones and blood
It's here that we live and die.

Listen as we sing of the land we love
As we sing our love of the plains
We sing of the sun and the bison chase
We sing of the land, blessed with freedom's grace.

Sing loud and long our song of the plains
Where we dance and laugh and cry
The plains are made of our bones and blood
It's here that we live and die.

III – Chanson de la Gornouillère

by Pierre Falcon

This version was collected by Marcien Ferland and appears in Chansons à répondre du Manitoba (Les Éditions du blé, 1979)

Voulez-vous m'écouter chanter?
C'est un' chan-son dévèrité.
C'é-tait le dix-neuf de jan d'arnier,
Les caups l'ont arrivé
En mil huit cent seiz'.
La band' des Bois-brûlés il' ont arrivés
Comm' des bravés guerriers

On a y' été à la Gornouillère,
Nous avons fait fair' trois prisonniers;
Trois prisonniers.
Voilà L'anglais qui l'est ici,
Pour piller not' pays.

Quand aussitôt nous avon déviré,
On a y' été les rencontrer.
Quand on a vu mais tous ces Anglais,
On était demonté.
On était en bandonnance aussi.
Mon Gouverneur! Voulez-vous arrêter
un petit môtent?
Je vousdrais parler.

Le Gouverneure s'creyait L'empereur.
I' a dit-z-à ses soldats: "Tirez!
Le premier, c'est l'Anglais
Qui a tiré l'am bassadeur:
Le-r-a manqué tuer tuer.

On 'est arrangé mais comm des gens d'honneur;
On a en-weyé-z-un ambassadeur
Sé vous aviez vu mais tous ces Anglais,
C'é-tait tout comme du bois brûlé.
En butte en butt' les Anglais culbutaient

Comm' les Bois brûlés jétant des cris de jouè

Se vous aviez vu mais tous ces Anglais!
N'avaient yingqu' cinq ou six dé sauvés!
Le Gouverneur criant-z-ses soldats:
Laissonles aller
l'emport'ront des novell's

Elle a té composée, la chanson
Sur la victoir' l'avait gagnée
C'est Pierrich Falcon, que cé beau garçon
Qui a composé la chanson.

Here is an English translation of the more often heard "Edith Fowke" version of the song.

Come and you will hear me sing
A song of a true and a brave thing.
The nineteenth of June our band of Brule Boys,
Arrived like soldiers full of joy.

When we arrived upon Frog Plain,
Three Orkney men we did detain —
Three Orkney men who'd come from over the sea
Come for to steal our fair country.

We were about to ride away,
When the Englishmen upon us came.
We soon had encircled their band of grenadiers
Which caused them all to halt in fear.

An envoy then we did send
To the governor of those Englishmen,
But the governor, being a proud and angry man,
Attacked him as he came along.

The governor thinks he's an emperor,
Thinks he can act like a great lord.
He thought he could scare off the Brule Boys,
But when we killed him it stopped his noise.

For his mistake with his life he paid;
Most of his grenadiers they were slain.
Four or five at most escaped that day,
While all the rest to our guns fell prey.

You should have seen those Englishmen
With our Brule Boys coming after them
Till one by one we did them all destroy,
Leaving our hearts so full of joy.

Who is the singer of this song?
My name it is Pierre Falcon.
I was the one who sat and wrote this song
About the Brule Boys so strong.

IV - Lorette

by Jean Teillet ©

Lorette Goulet was seventeen years old when she was gang raped in 1872 during the Reign of Terror. The outrage was committed by soldiers sent by Sir John A. Macdonald to Red River. When the Métis complained, bitterly, they were told by the colonel that what his men did off duty "was none of his business." In 1873 that colonel became one of the founding officers of the Northwest Mounted Police, later renamed as the RCMP.

Remember her
When sweet spring buds are blooming
They glisten in
And through the melting snow
As winter fades
The coldest nights are waning
Our girl is gone
But we remember her.

We never speak
Of how her life was taken
When soldiers came
And broke her in the snow
And still we grieve
That none were there to save her
Our girl is gone
But we still say her name.

And when we say
Lorette, her name it lingers
As warm spring air
Brings promise anew
It's then we hear
Her whispering she loves us
Our girl is gone
But in our hearts she stays.

Lorette is gone
But in our hearts she stays.

V - Buffalo Dreamers

by Jean Teillet ©

Long ago we were hunters on the plains
We lived for the chase of the herds
But our chase days are over
The herds sadly gone
Even the bones removed.

Lii Michifs, we are dreamers
We dream of the past
We dream of our life on the plains
We dream that someday in the future
The herds will roam again.

When the herds were gone the plains were changed
There are cities where grasses once grew
There are fences and farms
Black roads in straight lines
And trees that block the long view.

Lii Michifs, we are dreamers
We dream of the past
We dream of our life on the plains
We dream that someday in the future
The herds will live again.

If you are a dreamer you see them sometimes
Their souls still haunt the plains
There are glimpses and echoes
You can feel and you know
The herds will come back again.

Lii Michifs, we are dreamers
We dream of the past
We dream of our life on the plains
We dream that someday in the future
The herds will roam again.
The herds will live again
The herds will come back again.

VI - Riel and Lii Michifs

by Jean Teillet ©

In Michif, the Métis language, kiiyanaan means "ours". Aen saent means "a saint". Kaniikaniit means "leader" and aen braave means "hero".

When Riel came back home it was summer
And he walked with us, *lii Michifs*
Kiiyanaan, we said so proudly
He was one of us, our Riel.

In the fall we saw that he walked with God
We whispered in awe, *lii Michifs*
Aen saent, we said, so proudly
He was our new saint, our Riel.

When he called us to fight in the winter
We stood tall with him, *lii Michifs*
Kaniikaniit, we said, so proudly
He was our leader, Riel.

It was cold with snow that spring at Batoche
When we made our last stand, *lii Michifs*
Aen braave, we said, so proudly
He was our hero, Riel.

When they stole him from us on the gallows
We wept for our loss, *lii Michifs*
The names we gave him so proudly
Live on, live as ours, live with us.

He is one of still, our Riel
And *lii Michifs* are his, always his.

VII - Northwest Freedom

by Jean Teillet ©

In Michif (the language of the Métis) and in Cree, the Métis are known as Otipemisiwak. To the English, they were the Freeman. To the French, the gens libre. All refer to the people who say they “went free”. Over time they adopted Otipemisiwak as a name that describes them. It means, as Métis elder Louis Morin said, “the bosses of ourselves”. For Indigenous people the land is alive and dreaming. The infinity symbol has graced the Métis flag for over two centuries.

In the Northwest we opened our eyes
We saw what it meant to be free
Free from the church, the cities, the law
Free from our past
Liberty.

We chose to go free in the Northwest
We knew it was our destiny
Follow the chase, ride the wide plains
To live as we wished
Just to be.

Our nation was born in the Northwest
Names came from the traders and Cree
Otipemisiwak, freemen, gens libre
They all said the same
We were free.

The Northwest has long been our mother
She nurtures our restless esprit.
We both dream that we are becoming
Free now and for
Infinity.