#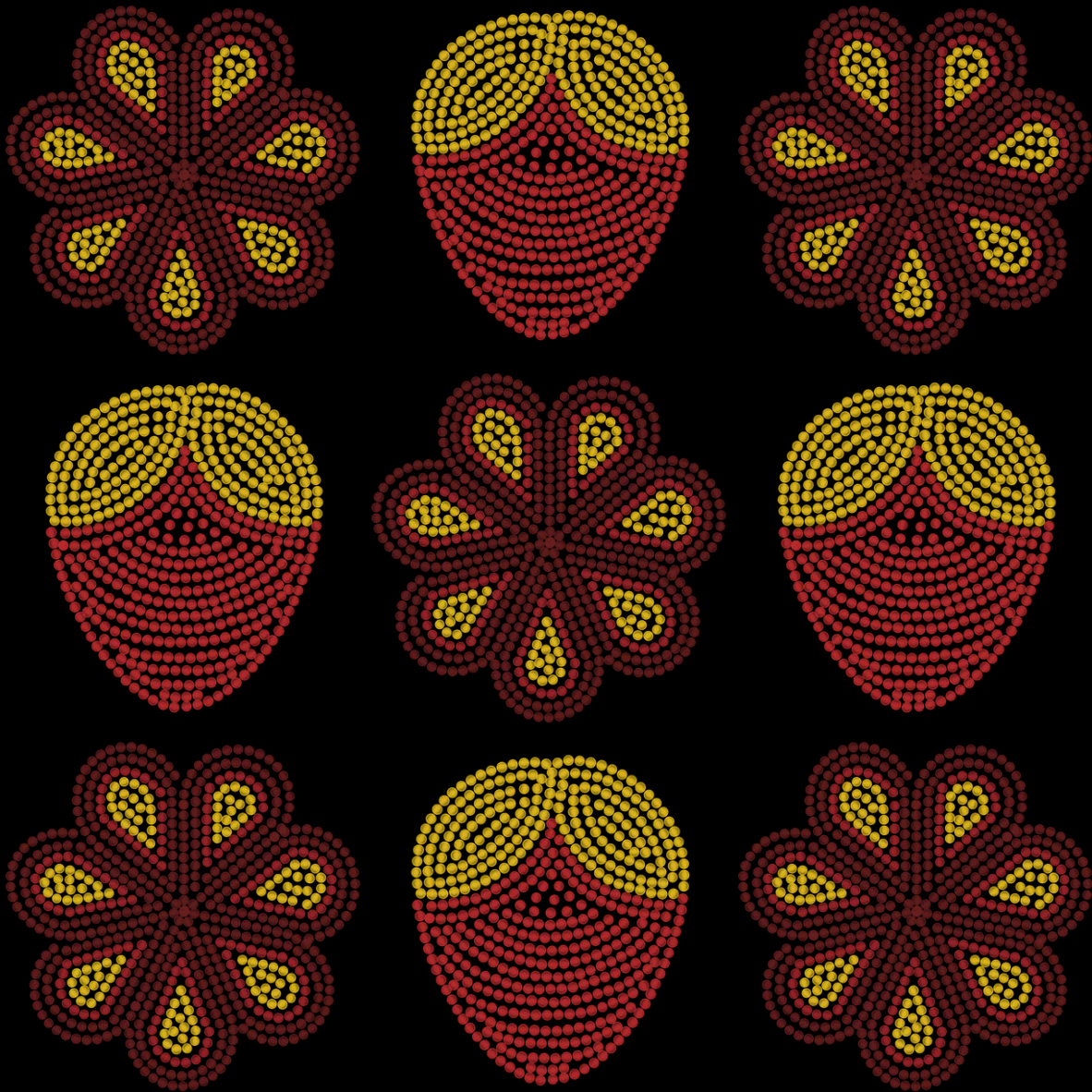 Kaanawapahta maytress/maytr d'ikol daan li niikinaahk: Taking a look at the experiences of Métis teachers in the homeland

Dr. Laura Forsythe &
Dr. Lucy Delgado

2025

Acknowledgements

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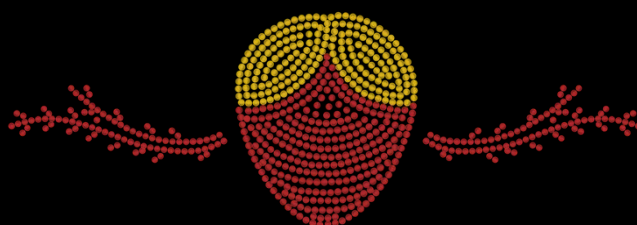
Researcher Positionality Statements

Laura Forsythe d-ishinikaashon. My name is Laura Forsythe. Ma famii kawyesh Roostertown d-oshciwak. My family was from Rooster Town a long time ago. Anosh ma famii Winnipeg wikiwak. Today, my family lives in Winnipeg. Ma Parentii (my ancestors) are Huppe, Ward, Berard, Morin, and Cyr. My ancestors worked for the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company. My ancestors once owned Lot 31, the site of Rooster Town. I am descended from buffalo hunters. I am descended from voyageurs. I am descended from the victors at Frog Plain. I am descended from farmers, ranchers, teamsters, seamstresses, and tradesmen; I come from the working class that built Manitoba and the Métis Nation. I am a Manitoba Métis Federation citizen and elected chairperson of the Bison Local. I am an assistant professor in the education faculty at the University of Winnipeg. I hold two Education-specific degrees: a Bachelor of Education from Simon Fraser University specializing in Indigenous Perspectives and a post-baccalaureate in early learning. As a high school educator, I taught English, Social Studies, and Indigenous Studies in mainstream and alternative settings.

Dr. Lucy Delgado. I am a Two-Spirit Métis woman, born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I am a citizen of the Manitoba Métis Federation. My family were Sinclairs, Cummings, Prudens, some of whom took scrip in St Andrews and St Johns, and I also have other family and ancestors from Red River, Oxford House, Norway House, and Sioux Valley Dakota Nation, and settler family from Ireland and the Orkney Islands. I am a community organizer, involved in a variety of local and national groups, and actively involved with the Two-Spirit Michif Local of the Manitoba Métis Federation. I am Canada Research Chair (Tier 2) in Michif and Two-Spirit Education as Wellness and Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, with a research and teaching focus on Métis youth identity and Indigenous education. I am also a trained teacher, holding a Bachelor of Education and Master of Education (with an Indigenous Education focus) from Lakehead University and a doctorate in Educational Foundations from the University of Saskatchewan. I have additional previous teaching experience in primary and secondary classrooms both as a homeroom teacher and substitute.

Research Questions

The lived realities of Métis educators require exploring on multiple fronts: recruitment and retention. The driving research questions for this study were:

1. What motivated these educators to pursue teacher education?

2. What supports, if any, were available to ensure success?

3. Post-graduation, what supports were offered to help secure employment?

4. How have their institutions impacted their ability to produce and share Métis knowledge in the classroom?

5. What advice do they have for those following in their footsteps?

Why Métis-Specific Matters

Métis scholars have criticized the academy for its pan-Indigenous approach (Anuik & Gillies, 2012; Campbell-Chudoba, 2019; Forsythe, 2022; Gaudry, 2013; Scott, 2020, 2021a, 2021b). Moreover, when not homogenous, there are also issues of misrepresentation with scholars such as Logan (2008) stating that "the colonizer's voice dominated Métis research, especially in the areas of history, anthropology and socio-political analysis" (p. 88). Gaudry and Hancock (2012) affirm that non-Métis scholars have broadly defined Métis scholarship to meet Canadian interests, bringing Haig-Brown's (2018) question of whom this serves to the fore. Maud (2021) states that "contemporary scholars, academics and government agencies continue to use the generic term Aboriginal or Indigenous when, more often than not, their work is First Nations specific" (p. 5), which highlights how Métis do not see themselves labeled as such in research or wonder whether a given use of a term applies to them.

This project specifically looked at the experiences of Métis teachers. Although numerous studies have documented the shared experience of all Indigenous teachers, there is a lack of Métis-specific experience. Simply having research on all Indigenous nations does not tell the story of how Métis educators experience K-12 education and employment.

The literature regarding Métis-specific teacher experience is scarce, and what is available is limited regionally. Two Métis scholars and educators, Carmen Gillies (2017) and Melanie MacLean (2004), have completed graduate studies research documenting and reflecting on Métis teachers' experiences in Saskatchewan. Gillies' (2017) dissertation approaches Métis educators' experiences as students and then as staff through a critical race theory (CRT) methodology, argues that "the racist practices and ideologies identified in the data structurally determine Whiteness and racialized academic outcomes in Saskatchewan schools" (p. ii) and suggests Indigenous student integration as a better alternative to ineffective Indigenous content integration. MacLean's (2004) thesis also relays the stories of Métis educators' experiences as students and staff, arguing that as Métis are minority teachers who have been schooled and must teach in white hegemonic educational systems, those who wish to challenge this hegemony receive little support and face resistance.
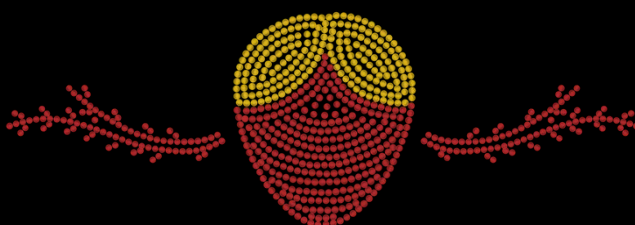
Gillies has published subsequent articles that further critique cultural integration and institutional racism in education. Gillies critiques cultural integration as a strategy to promote Indigenous student success in "Curriculum Integration and the Forgotten Indigenous Students: Reflecting on Métis Teachers' Experiences," citing Métis teachers' experiences with a refusal of individual teachers to teach Indigenous curricula, the objectification of Métis teachers, fractured teaching approaches of Indigenous content, and lack of anti-racist institutional attitudes as reasons for content integrations relative failure (2021). Gillies's (2022) article, "Seeing whiteness as property through Métis teachers' K-12 stories of racism," situates Métis educators racialized experiences within the CRT framework of "whiteness as property." Specifically, Gillies (2022) examines the "absolute right to exclude" content and practices outside of institutional comfortability, specifically Indigenous culture and, more specifically, Métis culture, worldviews, and practices, and the advantage it provides to white students and teachers (p. 149). They explain further that white educational systems reward Indigenous students and staff for conforming to white cultural norms and Western educational views and, in turn, directly and indirectly reprimand them for non-conformance (2022). While these works are invaluable insights into the realities and struggles of Métis teachers and students, they are limited in region (Saskatchewan only) and participant numbers, with thirteen and four interviewees (Gillies, 2017; MacLean, 2004).

The Canadian Teachers' Federation published a study called "Aboriginal Teachers' Professional Knowledge and Experience in Canadian Schools," which tells the stories of Indigenous educators' experiences nationally, proposing many meaningful recommendations about substantiative issues that need to be addressed in the education system, but lacks any Métis-specific analysis (St. Denis, 2010). With only two scholars exploring Métis-specific teacher experience on a regionally limited basis and other substantiative works on Indigenous teacher experience lacking First Nations, Inuit, and Métis-specific breakdowns of data, it is clear there is a gap in the literature on, and therefore a need for, research regarding Métis teachers' experience across the Métis homeland.

Geographical Scope

The research project invited Métis educators currently teaching in K-12 from throughout the Métis homeland to participate. Criteria included citizenship with one of the following four governing bodies: Métis Nation British Columbia, Otipemisiwak Métis Government, Métis Nation Saskatchewan, or Manitoba Métis Federation.

Forty-one Métis educators participated in the interview process: eight registered with Otipemisiwak Métis Government.

Figure 1 Métis Homeland Map 2019

Environmental Scan

Indigenous Insights, led by Dr. Gladys Rowe with research assistants Amanda Burton and Taylor Wilson, conducted an environmental scan looking at the numbers and experiences of Métis teachers across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. In conducting the scan, post-secondary institutions, school divisions, and school boards were contacted to obtain Métis-specific data, and public-facing websites were also reviewed.

This environmental scan detailed a persistent and systemic gap in the representation, recognition, and support of Métis educators across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. While some promising data points and initiatives exist—particularly within Métis-led institutions and programs like SUNTEP and NSITEP—the overall picture is one of fragmentation, opacity, and insufficient institutional responsibility. Public education bodies and post-secondary institutions routinely failed to provide data, often citing privacy concerns or the absence of disaggregated tracking systems. When data was shared, it was typically generalized under the category of "Indigenous," making it impossible to assess the specific experiences and needs of Métis educators and learners.

This lack of specificity and transparency is not neutral omission; it is a barrier to justice, equity, and informed action. Métis educators remain largely invisible in mainstream data systems, hiring processes, and program supports. Most post-secondary institutions reviewed in the scan offer no Métis-specific supports or programming in teacher education, and few demonstrate meaningful partnerships with Métis governments or communities. In many cases, institutions failed to respond to inquiries at all, reflecting not only gaps in knowledge but deeper gaps in relational accountability and systemic prioritization.

Provincially, there is a mismatch between the high representation of Indigenous (including Métis) students in public schools and post-secondary programs, and the underrepresentation of Indigenous teachers and faculty—especially in urban and provincial systems. Some school divisions, such as Winnipeg School Division and Saskatchewan Rivers Public School Division, provided data that reflects stronger commitments to tracking Indigenous staff; however, in nearly every case, disaggregated Métis-specific data was limited or absent. Without accurate, transparent, and culturally informed data collection, institutions cannot meaningfully respond to the needs of Métis peoples or measure progress toward reconciliation and systemic transformation. Environmental Scan: Alberta

Alberta presents some of the most significant data gaps in the scan. Only five of 295 public education bodies (PEBs) responded, with most unable or unwilling to track Métis teacher data. The Otipemisiwak Métis Government did not respond to information requests, and their website lacks resources tailored to teachers. Among PSIs, only the University of Alberta provided data, reporting 355 self-declared Métis Bachelor of Education graduates over ten years. Still, Métis-specific supports are absent from institutional websites. Despite the province's sizable Indigenous student population, Indigenous educators account for less than 1% of the workforce. With no mandatory tracking system, even self-declared data through TWINS remains confidential and inaccessible. These gaps reflect not just a lack of infrastructure, but a deeper systemic issue: Alberta's institutions have yet to take seriously their responsibility to know, support, and make visible Métis educators and education leaders. The absence of culturally affirming environments and relational practices reinforces barriers and erodes trust.

Métis Governing Body

Otipemisiwak Métis Government did not respond to the inquiry requesting information. According to their website, there are no teacher-specific resources.

Public Education Bodies (PEB): Métis-Specific

Out of 295 PEBs scanned, responses were obtained from 5. Frog Lake Band requested more information before they could proceed. An email to the researchers requesting this information was not returned. Maskwacis Education Schools Commission does not record this information. E2 Society for Twice-Exceptional Learners reported 1 Métis teacher, Ignite Alberta Institute for Learning and The Gilbertine Institute of Catholic Studies each reported 2.

Post-Secondary Institutions (PSI): Métis-Specific

Nine PSIs offering education programs were contacted. Eight did not respond (University of Calgary, Mount Royal University, University of Lethbridge, Concordia University of Edmonton, The King's University, Ambrose University, Burman University, and St. Mary's University). University of Alberta responded with the following data:
Number of self-declared Métis BEd grads over the past ten years:

Métis Graduates by Year - Bachelor of Education Year Total

Year	Total	Year	Total
2015	25	2016	33
2017	28	2018	33
2019	33	2020	43
2021	39	2022	36
2023	41	2024	44

Grand Total 355

According to their websites, none of the PSIs offered Metis-specific supports or resources for education students.

PSIs – General Indigenous Data

Indigenous representation in Alberta's post-secondary institutions is uneven, with some universities providing detailed data and others lacking transparency. The University of Alberta reports 2,184 Indigenous students (4.7%), with 96 Indigenous students in education graduate studies and 3.4% Indigenous faculty and staff (University of Alberta, 2023a; 2023b; 2025). The university has developed strong Indigenous student support services, including pathways to admission, scholarships, and cultural programming that emphasize Indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems (University of Alberta, 2025). The University of Calgary has 978 Indigenous undergraduate students (3.5%) and 251 Indigenous graduate students (3.1%), with Indigenous staff comprising 1.6% of non-academic staff and 1.3% of academic staff (University of Calgary, 2023). Mount Royal University reports 5.5% Indigenous students, while University of Lethbridge has 5.9% (482) Indigenous students overall with 7.3% (25) in Indigenous education (Mount Royal University, 2024; University of Lethbridge, 2024). Concordia University of Edmonton has 7.2% Indigenous students, though Indigenous faculty and staff data remain unavailable (Concordia University of Edmonton, 2024). Several smaller institutions, including The King's University, Ambrose University, and Burman University, do not provide publicly available data on Indigenous student enrollment or faculty representation. Across Alberta, 15,435 Indigenous students are enrolled, but only 1,044 are in Indigenous education programs (Government of Alberta, 2024).

63 Public School Authorities and Additional Education Bodies – General Indigenous Data

 Alberta demonstrates significant underrepresentation, with Indigenous teachers and school leaders accounting for less than 1% of the province's education workforce despite Indigenous students comprising approximately 7% of the K-12 population (College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2019). Alberta also lacks a mandated tracking system for Indigenous educators, despite providing an opportunity for Indigenous teachers to self-declare their identity through the Teacher Workforce Information Service (TWINS). However, this data remains confidential and is not publicly available, limiting transparency and making it challenging to assess Indigenous representation within the teaching workforce (College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2022). Many Indigenous educators in Alberta opt to work in Indigenous community schools rather than provincial schools due to systemic barriers and a lack of welcoming environments in mainstream education settings (College of Alberta School Superintendents, 2022).

Interview Methodology

Métis Educators were interviewed using Forsythe's (2022) Intertwined Michif Methodology, which intertwines three Métis methodologies theorized by Métis women: Keeoukaywin, Lii Taab di Faam Michif, and Kishkeeyihtamaaniwan Kaa-natohtamihk.Intertwining is inherently Métis, as witnessed through the creation of our own language, Michif, which has French nominal and verb stems combined with nêhiyawêwin nouns dependent on each and cannot be separated (Bakker, 1997). The method intertwines visiting, Métis kitchen table theory, and listening to learn in a conversational method of inquiry. The method intertwines visiting, Métis kitchen table theory, and listening to learn in a conversational method of inquiry.

Interview Analysis

We conducted an analysis of the interviews with the research questions in mind, and have consolidated stories based around the themes of recruitment and retainment.
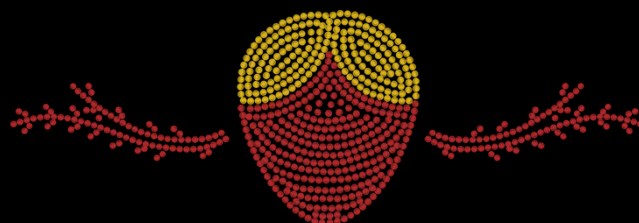
Recruitment

Post-secondary Education

As stated in the environmental scan, there was a significant lack of data in Alberta to speak to the proliferation of Métis teachers. One post-secondary institution (University of Alberta) responded to data requests and were able to provide Métis Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) graduate statistics from 2015 to 2024, noting a total of 355 Métis B.Ed. graduates over that period. The other eight major universities in the province did not respond, and none of the nine indicated any Métis-specific supports or resources for education students on their websites.

Of the self-reported data from the eight Métis participants from this region, all of those who chose to disclose the school they attended had completed their Bachelor of Education degree at the University of Alberta.

Bachelor of Education Institution Attended

● Unknown   ● University of Alberta

37.5%

62.5%
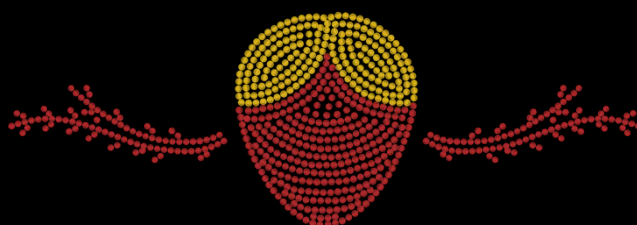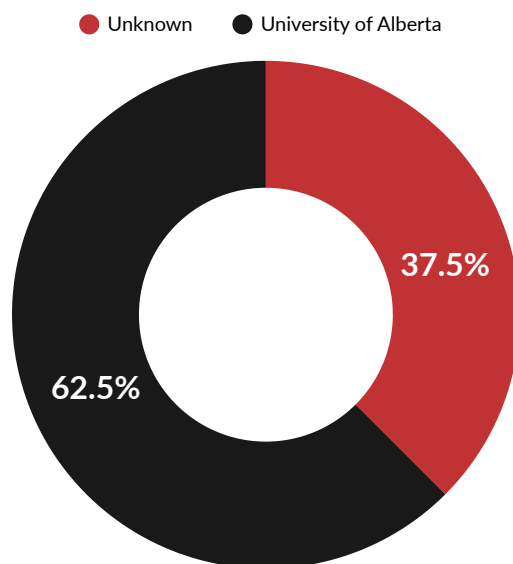
Funding

Métis teachers from Alberta had a variety of experiences with funding availability and most of the teachers interviewed indicated multiple sources of funding for their B.Ed. programs. Four of the eight participants had been teaching longer than 15 years and noted that they had not had funding available to them through the then Métis Nation of Alberta that they know is now available. Of those teaching longer than 15 years, participants reported paying for their B.Ed. degrees through working part time or full time, student loans, and financial support from their families. Newer graduates reported having financial support from the Métis Nation of Alberta, Rupert's Land Institute, and Indigenous scholarships from the institution, as well as family support and student loans. Out of all eight teachers, 50% received some funding from their Métis government, but those who did not indicated it was because it either was not available at that time, or they were ineligible due to not yet having their citizenship with the organization.
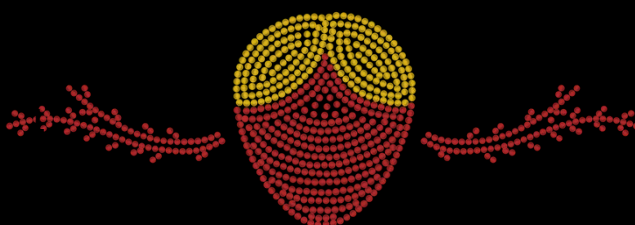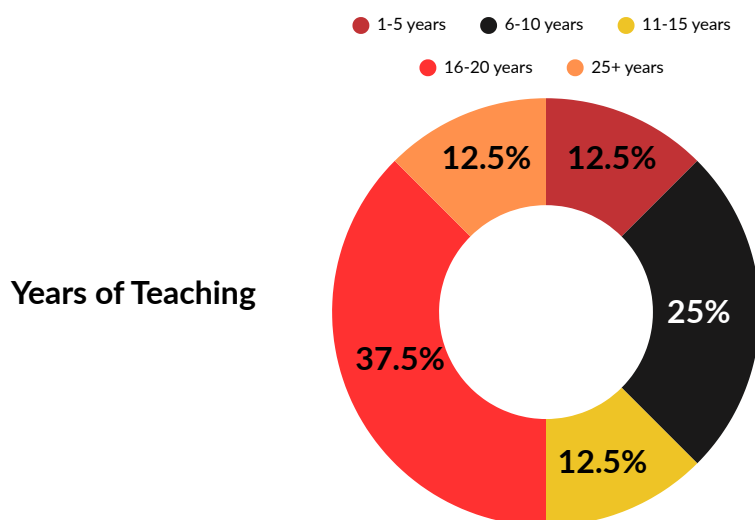
Hiring and Employment

When asked what had driven them to become educators, several Otipemisiwak Métis Government citizens who participated responded that they had always wanted to be a teacher from a young age, while others were encouraged by family members or romantic partners to consider the profession, or realized they enjoyed working with children from volunteering in adjacent fields. None of the participants were recruited by formal entities to enroll in a B.Ed. program.

Once they had graduated with teaching certification, 37% of participants found themselves having to move to a rural community to find a long-term teaching position, while others first substitute taught or took part-time contracts. Two participants felt it was easier to get a position once they self-declared as Métis, while another credited their French language knowledge for facilitating an easier hiring process.

Retainment

When the research team approached 295 public education bodies in Alberta to inquire about the number of Métis teachers working within their communities, schools, or divisions, only five PEBs responded and, of those, only three had Métis specific data about teachers. E2 Society for Twice-Exceptional Learners reported one Métis teacher, Ignite Alberta Institute for Learning and The Gilbertine Institute of Catholic Studies each reported two. Without data from public education bodies, we cannot know how many Métis teachers are working across the province.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Métis participants in Alberta often reported feeling like they were carrying the load of bringing in all Indigenous content (not just Métis content) into their schools. Of all respondents, 87% stated that they became the go-to source for Indigenous content in their school, and that this development for their colleagues and administrators was done unpaid and on top of their usual workload. Five of eight respondents also spoke about erasure of Métis perspectives under the word "Indigenous" – the content that administrators and colleagues asked for was actually First Nations specific, with one participant explaining that they were asked to teach about Haudenosaunee and Mi'kmaq cultures but discouraged from including Métis perspectives. Feeling like a token hire was also common, along with criticism from non-Indigenous colleagues about not being authentically Indigenous as Métis teachers were not always the same as First Nations teachings that were popular across divisions.

● 1-5 years ● 6-10 years ● 11-15 years

● 16-20 years ● 25+ years

Years of Teaching

12.5% 12.5%

25%

12.5%

37.5%

Retainment

Motivation to Stay

Five of the eight Otipemisiwak Métis Government citizens who participated in the interviews have remained in the teaching profession, while one has moved to administration, one retired early, and another left the field. Those that left did so after between 16 and 32 years of teaching. When asked why they remained or had remained in teaching, four pointed to support from their colleagues, administrators, and divisions as major reasons for staying in the profession. Another four shared that they had become role models for Métis and First Nations students in their schools as Métis educators and stayed to continue supporting Indigenous students in a good way.

Recommendations

After hearing from 41 Métis citizens who are or were employed as educators, we offer the following recommendations.

Moving forward, education systems must move beyond broad commitments to Indigenous inclusion and toward nation-specific (including Métis-specific) action, grounded in relational accountability. We urge all post-secondary institutions, school divisions, and boards to:

- Establish standardized, disaggregated data collection practices that recognize the distinct identities and rights of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples;

- Invest in Métis-specific recruitment, mentorship, and retention strategies for teachers and faculty;

- Develop sustained partnerships with Métis governments and educators to co-design culturally grounded and community-led programming;

- Expand financial, academic, and cultural supports for Métis teacher candidates across all post-secondary institutions; and

- Embed Métis knowledge systems and worldviews into the fabric of institutional policy and practice

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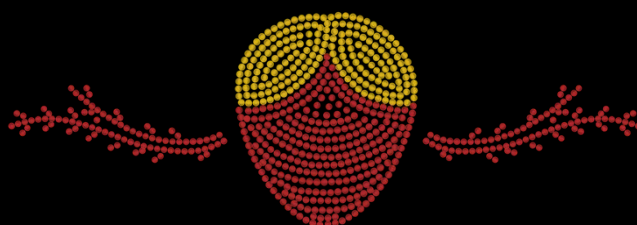
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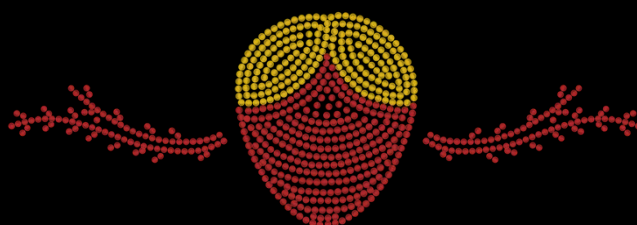
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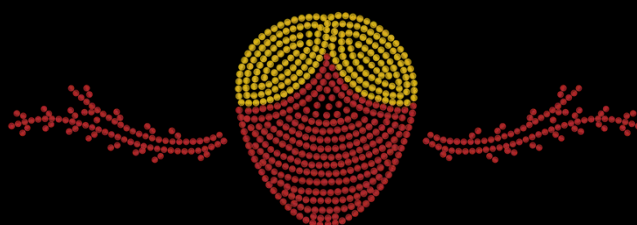
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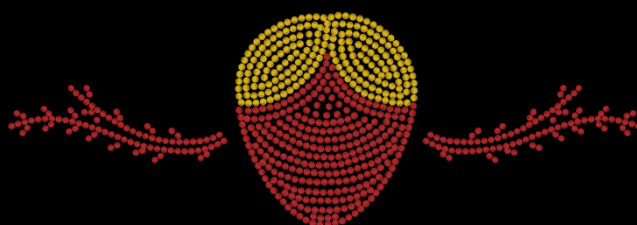
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