

# Bringing Métis Children's Literature to Life—Call of the Fiddle

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**Overview of Story:** *Call of the Fiddle* completes the Nolin trilogy. Nolin embraces his Métis heritage and carries on his family's traditions. This story captures Batoche's history and significance. Join Nolin one last time as he hears the rollicking rhythm of the "Red River Jig," learns of tearful memories, and experiences the excitement of competition at *Back To Batoche!*

## Themes in this book:

- Mentorship from grandparent/ways of learning
- Family/love/kinship/joking
- Learning new things/doubt/confidence
- Dance/jigging
- Music/fiddle/spoons/guitar
- Food
- Clothing/sash
- Métis celebration/competition
- Métis history/Batoche/resistance/conflict
- Camping

## Possible Curriculum connections:

### Language Arts

- Comprehend & Respond
- Alliteration (rollicking rhythm of the "Red River Jig")
- Grammar: Adjectives

### Math

- Currency
- Skip counting

### Science

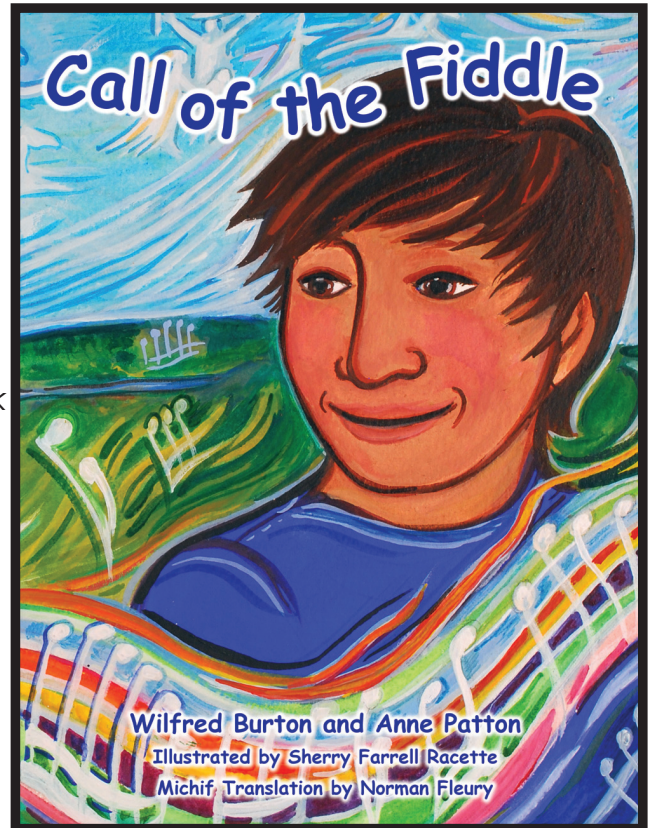
- Constellations

### Arts Education

- Dance: rhythmical movement
- Three-dimensional Art: weaving of the sash

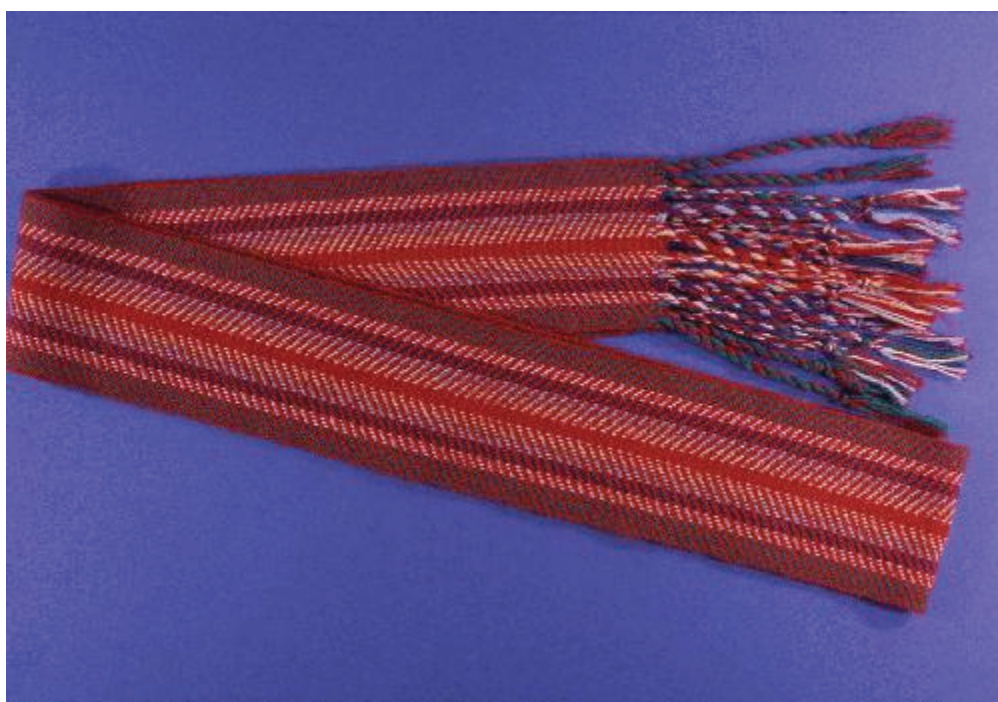
### Social Studies

- Cultural diversity
- Divergent viewpoints
- Power and privilege
- Dynamic relationships
- Symbolism/meaning of the sash/uses of the sash
- Historical events influencing Canadian identity

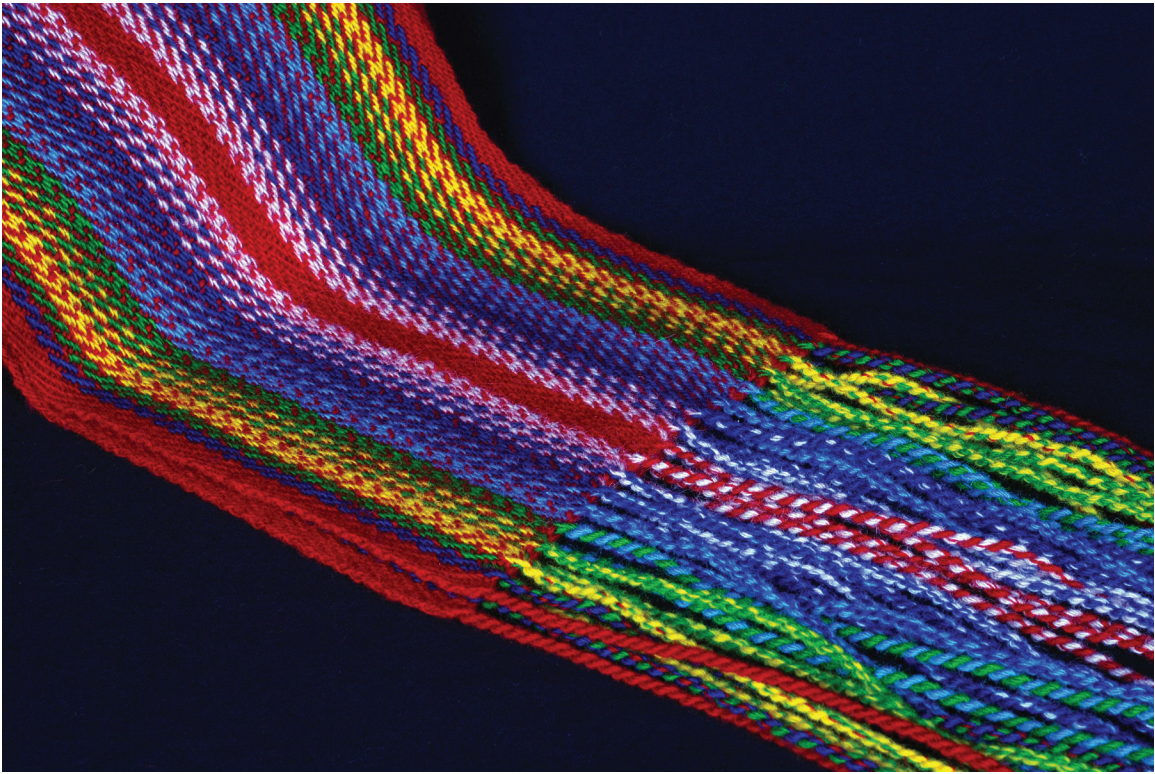


### Before Reading:

- Using a real sash or a colour picture of a sash, share the importance of the sash to the Métis.
- Discuss the importance of colour. In this story, the sash is black, red, white, yellow, and green/blue.
- Have the students close their eyes and **visualize**. Say a colour, and then have the students turn and talk to the person next to them about the feelings and memories that colour evokes for them, and **infer** the symbolism of that colour to the Métis. E.g.: Green = “green grass and the time we went to the valley all the new leaves were coming out,” etc. (The symbolism of the colours of the sash are based on the artisan's choice, drawn on their history and lived experience.)
- Compare student responses.









**During Reading:** Using a graphic organizer with the list of colours, have the students record the parts of the book that evoke a feeling for each colour. E.g.: blue = Métis flag; black = dark times, etc.

How do these colours make you feel? Why?

Red	Blue	White
Black	Green	Yellow

**After Reading:**

**Meaning of the Sash Lesson:**

a) Symbolism of the sash:

- 1. Colours
- 2. Weaving cultures together
- 3. Honoring
- 4. family connections

b) Uses for the sash: belt (to keep your capote/coat closed), washcloth/towel (when traveling, the voyageurs didn't take along toiletries), tallying device (Since paper and pencils were almost non-existent out in the bush, the sash was used to keep tally by tying knots in the fringe of the sash for every pelt or bundle of pelts), calendar (since watches weren't used extensively, many tied knots in the fringe to keep track of their days away), pocket/storage (when the sash was folded in half and tied around one's waist, it created a pocket to store things like a knife, etc.), rope (sashes were often taken off and thrown to others as a tow rope in a canoe, to tie up a horse/hobble it, etc.), girl catcher (at dances a man might take off his sash to lasso a girl that he fancied to dance with her), and sewing kit (often fringes were cut off and used to sew up torn clothing), etc.

c) Using photographs of different sashes or real sashes have the students, in small groups, discuss the symbolism of that sash. Ask them to **think of other ways** that the sash could be used as a utilitarian object.

Background information on the sash: <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/00741>.

**Additional Post-Reading Lessons for Call of the Fiddle:**

**Critical Issue Lesson:**

1. Present the issue below. Before reading the back of the book about Batoche and the 1885 Resistance, place the students in small groups and have them **infer** using this scenario ...



*Scenario:* For years the Métis shared the land in Western Canada with First Nations people. The land provided for them well. They created communities along the Red River and the South Saskatchewan River in the river lot land-holding system. (Batoche river lot map – <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/01820>). This created tension between the Métis and the settlers/Canadian government. You are the Prime Minister of Canada in 1885. How would you settle this conflict?

- Prepare these statements on cards.
- Give each group a set of all the following statements:

Take all the settlers back to their home country and leave the land to the Métis and First Nations.
Create a reserve for the Métis and divide the rest of the land for the settlers.
Send in the Canadian militia to crush the Métis resistance.
Bring the Métis leaders and the government officials together to work out a deal.

- Have students rank the statements from what they think really happened to what they think was least likely to happen (**determining importance**). Have them support their ranking through discussion.
2. Read the text about Batoche and the resistance out loud to the group.
  3. Give students some time at the end of the reading to readjust their ranking of the cards.
  4. Determine the outcome of the issue based on what was written. Discuss and ask questions.

**Jigging Lesson:** Refer to the Dance unit in *Bringing Métis Literature to Life* for a logical post-reading activity for *Call of the Fiddle*.

**“The Big Rip Off” Lesson:** La Mishow Wayayshhaywuk: The Big Rip Off, which is subtitled “Loss of a Land Base: Métis Land Disentitlement” is a resource guide for teachers that is designed to teach students about the dispossession of Métis lands. The teacher leads students through an activity to simulate the experiences of the Métis. This resource is available at: <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/03145>.

