

The Accomplished Teillet Family of St. Vital

Jean Teillet, BFA, LLB. (b. 1953)

Jean Teillet, lawyer, professional dancer and actor, artist, choreographer, academic, and volunteer, is a Metis patriot of the highest order. Jean Teillet is the great grand-niece of Louis Riel and the niece of Roger Teillet who was a Liberal MP and cabinet minister under prime minister Lester Pearson. She is a founding member of the Métis Nation of Ontario and what has now become the *National Aboriginal Moot* at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law.



A former modern dancer, she left that profession to attend law school and pursue a career in Aboriginal Rights law. She was vice-president and secretary-treasurer of the Indigenous Bar Association of Canada. As a legal consultant to the Metis National Council, Teillet has been involved in the ongoing Metis legal battles with the government of Canada concerning Metis land rights, harvesting rights, commercial harvesting, and self-government. Jean Teillet was awarded the first ever Lincoln Alexander Award in 2002 by the Law Society of Upper Canada. This award recognized her outstanding contributions and commitment to the legal profession and to community service. In 2005, she received the Aboriginal Justice Award, which recognizes her outstanding contributions to Aboriginal Justice Initiatives. Her publication, the *Metis Law Summary*, updated regularly since 1999, is the best available resource on the law with respect to Metis people. It is available on the Metis Nation of Ontario website.

Jean was the lead lawyer on the R vs Powley Metis hunting rights case, which she argued before the Supreme Court of Canada on March 17, 2003. She was successful in this decade long battle to reaffirm Metis rights under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act* of 1982, when the Supreme Court handed down their decision to deny the Crown's appeal on September 19, 2003. Jean is a partner in the firm of Pape Salter Teillet, Barristers and Solicitors. She has been called to the Bar in Ontario, BC, NWT and Manitoba. In her words: "The primary focus of my work as a lawyer has been to assist in

the development of a healthy space for Aboriginal people within Canadian Society—a space where Aboriginal people will be respected and valued as contributing citizens of Canada.”

Jean has written about the notion of a pardon or other exoneration for Louis Riel in “Exoneration for Louis Riel: Mercy, Justice, or Political Expediency?” She takes the view that exoneration would likely have little to do with the Metis people or the cause for which Riel died. The interested reader can read her paper in the *Saskatchewan Law Review*, Volume 67, 2004: 359-392.

Philippe Martin Teillet. (b. 1950)

Metis scientist Philippe Teillet is the son of Roger Teillet noted below. Philippe is an adjunct professor in the Department of Geography, University of Ottawa. He is employed as a research scientist by Natural Resources Canada. He holds a BSc. from the University of Ottawa and MSc. and PhD. from the University of Toronto Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics. His 1977 dissertation was entitled “Differential Rotation and Meridional Circulation in Stellar Atmospheres.” At the 23rd Canadian Remote Sensing Symposium Dr. Teillet was awarded “Best Symposium Paper,” for “A Lifetime Radiometric Calibration Record for Landsat Thematic Mapper.”

Roger Teillet, M.L.A., M.P., P.C. (1912-2002)

Red River Metis Roger Teillet was the grandson of Louis Riel’s younger brother, Joseph. He was born on August 12, 1912 in St. Vital, across the road from the present Riel House historical site. He attended College Saint-Boniface but was forced to leave after two years because of the Depression. He apprenticed at the Banque Nationale then joined the Royal Canadian Air Force 17 days before Canada entered World War II. He served as a navigator in the 35 Squadron and was shot down while on his 25th night bombing raid (August 23, 1942). He parachuted behind German lines at Recy, France thus becoming a member of the “Caterpillar Club” for airmen saved by parachute on land. He evaded capture for 15 days before he was taken prisoner. He was imprisoned at Stalag III (Sagan, Germany). During the Great Escape from this camp, later immortalized in movies, Roger was number 136 on the escape list. Seventy-six men got out before their escape tunnel was discovered. Seventy-three of these men were recaptured and the Germans shot fifty of those. When the Russians entered Germany in January 1945, the prisoners were herded back and forth across Germany and many perished on the “death marches.” The British liberated Roger and his group on May 6, 1945, Roger weighed only 127 pounds when liberated. Subsequently, he always wore his Bird in a Cage pin, the symbol of imprisoned flyers.

Upon returning to Winnipeg, Roger opened an insurance agency and settled down with his wife Jeanne. He then ran in the provincial election and served as a Liberal MLA under Premier Douglas Campbell. He then ran federally and was elected as an MP in 1962. Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson made him minister of Veterans Affairs in April

of 1963. In 1968, after Pierre Trudeau's election call, Teillet lost the Liberal nomination to Joe Guay by 100 votes. Trudeau subsequently named Teillet as head of the Canadian Pension Commission and gave him a mandate to reform veterans' pensions. He always said that this was his proudest accomplishment. Roger retired from the commission in 1980 and they continued to live in Ottawa. His wife Jeanne predeceased him in 2000. (Contributed by Kathleen Teillet.)

Yolande Teillet, (Schick). (1928-2006)

Hall of fame baseball player Yolande Teillet is the daughter of Camille Teillet and Sarah Riel. Her grandfather was Joseph Riel the younger brother of Louis Riel. Joseph Riel married Eléonor Poitras on April 30, 1884 and was subsequently married to Amanda Perrault in 1894. He remained at the family home in St. Vital and farmed. He was always active in Red River Metis associations. Camille, Yolande's father, although not Metis was a very active member of L' Union Nationale Métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba. She is the sister of Manitoba Member of Parliament, Roger Teillet whose biography appears above.

A catcher, Yolande was a Canadian member of the All-American Girls Baseball League from 1945 to 1947. The league scouted in Canada and six Manitoba women were selected. At the time she was scouted Yolande was playing for the St. Vital Tigerettes. Yolande played for the Fort Wayne (Illinois) Daisies. In 1945 her team finished second (62-47 record) to the league champion Rockford Peaches. Yolande notes that they converted from softball players to hardball. The ball used in the All-American Girls Baseball League was somewhat larger than a regulation hardball used by the men's professional leagues.

Yolande Teillet from St. Vital, Manitoba was inducted into the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in June of 1988. Also in 1988, the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York honoured the AAGBL with a permanent display and listed the names of each player. Similarly, the Manitoba Baseball Hall of fame inducted Yolande in 1988.



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Metis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute

Reference:

Teillet, Kathleen, "A Manitoba native son is laid to rest." *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 12, 2002: A4.

This article has been compiled with the assistance of Kathleen Teillet, and is in part based upon interviews with Kathleen and her daughter Jean as well as the late Yolande Teillet-Schick.