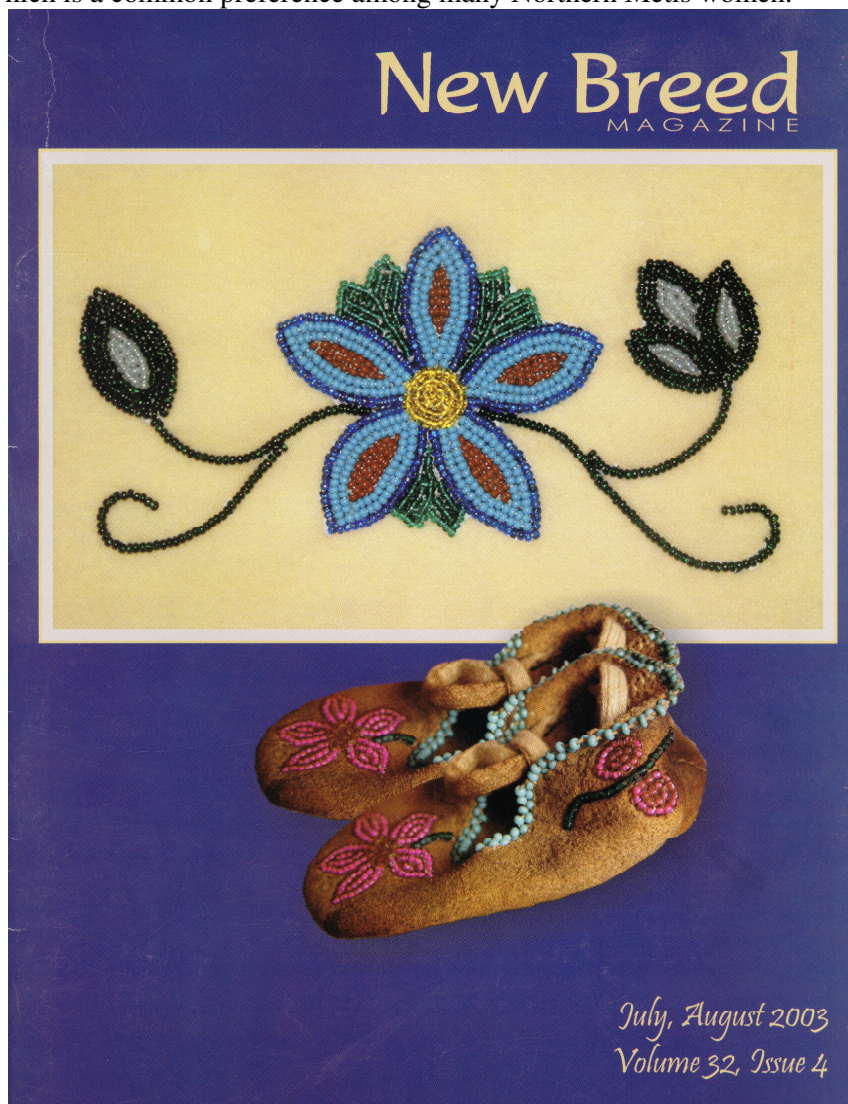


Isabelle Dorion Impey. (b. 1944)

Kathy Hodgson-Smith and Leah Dorion

Isabelle was born on February 13, 1944, in Cumberland House, Saskatchewan. She learned to do beadwork from her mother Cecilia, and other women in the community of Cumberland House. Her aunties, Helen, Anne, and Maria Dorion, were also influential in teaching her how to sew and do beadwork on clothing. The teachings she received were transmitted in the Swampy Cree language in which Isabelle is fluent.

She remembers that traditionally women did beadwork in small social groups and to this day she still does beadwork with family members such as Rosalie Sinclair from Pukatawagan, Manitoba. Isabelle says that, "My favourite designs are the Metis style flower beadwork and I enjoy beading the northern flowers." Isabelle prefers bright coloured beads on a very dark background, which is a common preference among many Northern Metis women.



Here Isabelle's beaded flower is featured on the cover of *New Breed Magazine*. She calls this an Arctic Flower. Photo by Leah Dorion.

Isabelle is the daughter of Metis activist James Brady. Her mother was Cecilia Dorion who was a respected trapper in the area. In 1968 Isabelle married Ernest Impey. A widow, she is mother of six children and grandmother of 18. She went to Charlebois School in Cumberland House and completed high school at Our Lady of the Providence Convent in Prince Albert. She went on to complete a Social work degree. Isabelle worked for 22 years at the Prince Albert Indian Student Education Centre and became superintendent of student services. She taught for the Gabriel Dumont Institute and the University of Regina Human Justice Program. She also worked for the First Nations Government Specialist Training Program in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Isabelle and served as an Elder on the steering committee of the Aboriginal Gang Initiative, a team of Aboriginal facilitators working with those involved or affected by Aboriginal gangs. Isabelle was involved with the provincial and federal Human Rights Commissions and is a past Director of the Gabriel Dumont Institute.



This style of beaded flower bud is very characteristic of her work.



Isabelle, at the 2011 Community Christmas Diner.
Prince Albert Daily Herald photo by Keely J Dakin.

Isabelle has worked as a family and child activist her entire lifetime. She has held important advisory positions such as a Royal Northwest Mounted Police Commissioner, the Canadian Human Rights Council Commissioner, the Correctional Service of Canada Commissioner, and served on the Canadian Centre for Police and Race Relations advisory council. Isabelle is also an Elder for Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College located in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. She is currently an Elder for the Opikinawasowin Elders' Council which is an Elders circle that works with Aboriginal families in trauma and advises the court on family justice situations. Isabelle currently makes her home in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.¹

References:

Kathy Hodgson-Smith, "Carrying on the Dorion Traditions," *New Breed Magazine*, July/August, 2002: 38-40.

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¹ From Leah Dorion, "Opikinawasowin: The Life Long Process of Growing Cree and Metis Children." M.A. Thesis, Athabasca University, 2010:146-147.