

Velma Orvis (b. 1940)

Velma describes herself as the Half-Breed daughter of John “Jack” Orvis (1902-1984) and Catherine Cooper (Métis, 1903-1997) from Balsam Bay, Manitoba. She is the granddaughter of John Benson Orvis and Isabella Irving (1861-1944); and great granddaughter of William Irving (b. 1831) and Elizabeth Louis (b. 1839) on her paternal side. On the maternal side she is the granddaughter of Charles Cooper (b. 1878) and Jane Mary Halcrow (b. 1837). Her great-grandfather Jeremiah Cooper was born in 1842 at St. Andrews and married Catherine Thomas who was born at Lac Brochet in 1846.

Velma is currently the Grandmother Keeper of the moccasin vamps of Walking With Our Sisters, an installation art project of 1,700 pairs of moccasin tops or “vamps” commemorating and representing an estimated 824 Aboriginal women and girls who have been murdered or gone missing in Canada since 1961. The Winnipeg event is being held at the Urban Shaman Gallery from March 21 to April 12, 2014.



Elders, Velma Orvis and Helen Lesperance with Sherry Farrell Racette (Lead Curatorial and Installation Advisor) in the front row and Daina Warren, Director of Urban Shaman Gallery and Sandra Delaronde of the Helen Betty Osborne Foundation in the back row.

Velma is active with Ka Ni Kanichihk (Those Who Lead), Grandmother’s Council and the Grandmothers Protecting our Children group. She is also a current member of the National Parole Board Prairie Region. She is also a former member of the Manitoba Council on Aging (to 2007).



Elder Velma Orvis packs her ceremonial pipe with elder Albert McLeod, rear, who prepares a smudge ceremony at The Aboriginal Women Responding to the HIV/AIDS Crisis program, funded through Ka Ni Kanichihk, (2013, Joe Bryksa / Winnipeg Free Press)

Orvis Family Métis Scrip

Irving, Matilda; address: Grand Marais; claim no. 1580; born: 9 Aug., 1874 at Grand Marais; father: John Orvis (Whiteman); mother: Mary Ann McLean (Métis); married: 1887 at St. Clements to Willia Irving; scrip cert.: form E, no. 3449.

Scrip affidavit for Louis, James; born: 25 December 1807; father: Joseph Louis (Métis); mother: Indian; claim no: 175; date of issue: May 1, 1876; wife: Isabella, daughter of Andrew Spence; died: Apr., 1874; heirs: her children Sarah, widow of John Bird; Hanna, wife of Charles Purdy; Emma, wife of John Dyser; Chloe, wife of Henry Bird; Isabella, wife of William Irving; William; Peter; and Andrew's children, William, Andrew and James; claim no: 176.

Scrip affidavit for Halcrow, Joseph; born: November 16, 1837; father: Thomas Halcrow (Métis); mother: Sarah Halcrow (Métis); claim no: 112; date of issue: May 1, 1876

Scrip affidavit for Halcrow, Mary Ann, wife of Joseph Halcrow; born: June 1845; father: James Corrigan (Métis); mother: Hannah Corrigan (Métis); claim no: 113; date of issue: May 1, 1876

Scrip affidavit for Cooper, Catherine; wife of Jeremiah Cooper; born: Apr. 12, 1846; father: Charles Thomas (Métis); mother: Mary Bouvier (Métis); claim no.: 38; date of issue: May 1, 1876

Thomas, Nancy - Concerning her claim as a head of family - Address, Prince Albert - Born, 1846 at Lac Caribou - Father, Charles Thomas, (Métis) - Mother, Marie Bouvier, (Métis) - Married, 1864 at Fort Cumberland to Louis Deschambeault - Children living, eight (names on declaration) - Children deceased, one - Scrip for \$160 - Claim 1433.

Scrip affidavit for Thomas, Richard; born: 17 February 1858; father: Charles Thomas (Métis and deponent); mother: Mary Bouvier (Métis); wish to partake in allotment and distribution of land set apart for Métis children.



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
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