

## The Voyageurs: Forefathers of the Métis Nation

Author: Zoey Roy

Illustrator: Jerry Thistle

Translator: Norman Fleury

**Overview of Story:** *The Voyageurs: Forefathers of the Métis Nation* tells an old story integral to both the birth of the Métis Nation and to the development of Canada in a new and engaging format. Zoey Roy has eloquently transformed the history of the voyageurs into a spoken-word performance poem which she has shared live at numerous events over the last several years. In this innovative resource, Zoey masterfully informs the reader and listener of the voyageurs' history, background, and lifeways in the format popular with today's youth. To fully appreciate Zoey's masterful delivery, a DVD to accompany this book was essential. Combined with Jerry Thistle's evocative illustrations and Norman Fleury's Michif translation, this resource becomes a teaching tool, a work of art, and the impetus for further research all in one.

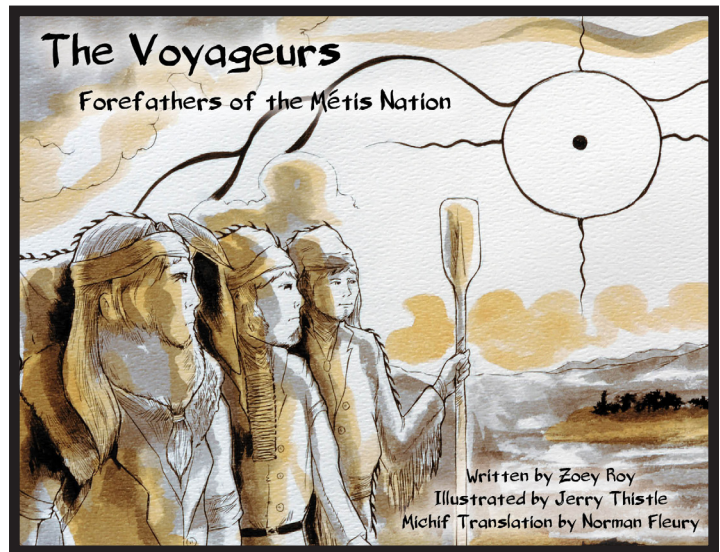
### Themes in this book:

- The genesis of the Métis Nation
- Voyageurs
- Fur Trade
- Country Wives
- Endurance, perseverance, sacrifice
- Waterways
- North West Company
- Families
- Ceremony
- Paddle songs
- European fashion
- Living off the land

### Possible Curriculum Connections:

#### Language Arts

- Recognize the range of cultures, experiences, and ideas conveyed through First Nations and Métis texts.
- Explore topic, problem, question, or issue



in a variety of ways (e.g., dance pieces, visual representations, drama in context, diagram, demonstration, and charts).

#### Science

- Interdependence of plants and animals, including humans, within habitats and communities.
- Indigenous knowledge of ecosystems

#### Social Studies

- How First Nations and Métis have shaped and continue to shape Saskatchewan.
- History of Euro-Canadian and European immigration to Saskatchewan, including explorers and fur traders.
- Relationship of Métis with the land.



## Social Studies Continued

- Euro-Settler influence on pre-confederation Canadian society.
- Importance of sustainable management of the environment.
- Cultural change over time.

## Arts Education

- Ways the arts can express ideas about identity.

### **Before Reading/Listening:**

Show students a map of pre-contact North America. Have the students imagine what Canada was like before European influence, when there were just Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island. What was it like? Who were the people who inhabited the land on which the school sits? This could be the beginning of great inquiry project.

(<http://comparativeedresidentialschool.weebly.com/life-pre-contact-for-aboriginal-people.html>)

Ask: What was the big attraction for Europeans to come to Canada and then stay? (Fur trade). How did the fur trade shape what Canada is like today?

This book was originally a spoken-word piece that was then published in book format. Can anyone define spoken-word? Explain to the students if they don't know. (*Spoken Word is poetry intended for onstage performance, rather than exclusively designed for the page. While often associated with hip-hop culture, it also has strong ties to storytelling, modern poetry, post-modern performance, and monologue theatre, as well as jazz, blues, and folk music. Due to its immediacy and direct rapport with its audience, this type of poetry often contains references to current events and issues relevant to a contemporary audience. At its best, spoken word is a powerful, high-energy form of expression that attracts artists and audiences of all ages from a wide range of disciplines and socio-cultural backgrounds.*)  
From Urban Dictionary: <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Spoken%20Word>

Listen to Zoe doing this selection in spoken word format. How is it different than when you read it?

### **During Reading:**

First read silently and as you read, find the beat of the words. The second time around read aloud to a beat.

### **After Reading:**

Examine the questions and discussions you had in the prereading stage. What else do you know about the genesis of the Métis Nation from reading this piece? What else do you know about why Europeans came to Canada?



**Additional Activities:**

- Break into pairs or small groups and practice reading sections out loud. Add sounds and different intonations. Record and listen. Present to the class.
- Beaver Activity: (See *Peter Fidler and the Métis* lesson plans in *Bringing Métis Children's Literature to Life Teacher Guide*).
- Endurance: The voyageurs could paddle a canoe at 40 strokes per minute for up to 12 hours. Set up a course in the gym where a student would have to carry a weight, conduct a paddle simulation, and climb as in portaging. Who has the best endurance? Can you make a statement at the end of this simulation on what it would take to have the stamina of the voyageurs?
- Mapping: Starting in Montreal (Lachine), Athabasca Basin (Portage La Loche) to the Pacific Northwest. How would they travel such distances in short periods of time? What barriers did they overcome?
- What are some of the advantages of being a "Pork eater"? What are some of the advantages of being a "Northmen"?

