



Artwork by George Gingras

## Z is for Zest

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### Z si poor chi chiikayhtamihk

Lii Michif kii chiikayhtamwuk chi pimatishichik kaa niimichik pi ka naakamoochik.



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The Métis people's zest for life is displayed by their love of song and dance.

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The Métis have always been a social and festive people. They received their strong sense of family and community from all their ancestors. All these ancestors provided the Métis with a love of song and dance and their "joie de vivre" or "joy of life." The Métis blended these **traditions** into very unique music and dance styles.

The Métis' favourite musical instrument is the fiddle. They quickly adapted Scottish and French-Canadian playing styles, creating their own rhythms and songs. From this new style emerged such tunes as the "**Red River Jig**" and "**Drops of Brandy**." These new songs led to the creation of new dances too. The Métis took the Scottish **jig**, **First Nations step-dancing**, and French-Canadian **square dancing** to create a unique dancing style. Some of the more popular Métis dances include the "**Sash Dance**" and the "**Rabbit Dance**."

In the past, Métis celebrations involved a great deal of fiddle playing and dancing. These celebrations often lasted three days or more and went from house to house. Each family welcomed all their guests and fed them. Whatever food was available was shared with the guests. This festive spirit can still be seen at such present-day Métis celebrations as **Back to Batoche**, the **Prince Albert Métis Fall Festival**, **Palmberre Days**, and **The John Arcand Fiddle Fest**. These are good times for the Métis to visit friends and relatives.

### Other Resources:

Arcand, John et al. *Drops of Brandy Vol. 1 and 2*. CDs. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2002.

Burton, Wilfred and Anne Patton. *Fiddle Dancer* (2007), *Dancing in My Bones* (2009), and *Call of the Fiddle* (2011). Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute Press.

Burton, Wilfred, C. Troupe and J. Arcand. *Master of the Métis Fiddle – John Arcand: The Man, The Music, The Festival*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute Press, 2019.

Dorion, Leah et al. *Drops of Brandy: An Anthology of Métis Music*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2002.

Pelletier, Jeanne. *Steps in Time*. The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture. (<http://www.metismuseum.ca/browse/index.php?id=208>).

\_\_\_\_\_. *Steps in Time II: Métis Dance and Instruction Featuring "The Métis Thunder" Dancers*. DVD. Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2008.

Roy, Sylvie and W. Burton. *Let Me See Your Fancy Steps—Story of a Métis Dance Caller. The Story of Jeanne Pelletier as told to Sylvie Sara Roy and Wilfred Burton*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute Press, 2015.

*The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture* ([www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)).

