

**Press Kit for Wesaketewenowuk: Roots Growing Up**

By Producer/Director Judy Iseke

**Website:** [ourelderstories.com](http://ourelderstories.com)

**Facebook:** [ourelderstories](https://www.facebook.com/Ourelderstories)

**Project Title:** Wesaketewenowuk: Roots Growing Up

**Project Logline:**

Métis are the resilient roots growing up after a fire but our Michif language is highly vulnerable so its revitalization is encouraged through a new Michif-language song by Andrea Menard based on Elder stories by Tom McCallum.

**Project Positioning Statement:**

Wesaketewenowuk: Roots Growing Up (after a fire) is a beautiful educational short film about Métis resilience and stories to encourage revitalization of the endangered Michif language through development of a new Michif-language song. Andrea Menard's song, based on Tom McCallum's Elder stories, support communities and educators' actions toward reconciliation while they reaffirm connections to the Métis homeland in Edmonton.

**Biographies**

**Dr. Judy M. Iseke, B.Ed., M.Ed., PhD – Credentials, experience and training**

Dr. Judy Iseke is an artist and filmmaker and former Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Education, Lakehead University, former Associate Professor, University of Toronto and former Director of Indigenous Education, MacEwan University. She is from St. Albert, Alberta originally where she descends from the Métis Bellerose family. She makes Edmonton home. She is a mother of 3 and grandmother to 1 and shares films to help younger generations know who they are and their roots. Her academic research has focused on Métis storytelling and particularly Elders' stories. Her most recent film is *Wesaketewenowuk: Roots Growing Up* funded and available on Telus and supported by the Edmonton Heritage Council. She has produced 5 previous films including *Paper Mache Totem Poles in the Library* which premiered at Imaginative in 2006. Four educational documentaries with Elders were broadcast on Shaw network in 2013 and 2014 including 1) *A Living History of Métis Families as told by Dorothy Chartrand* (2008); 2) *Grandmothers of the Métis Nation*. (2010); 3) *Understanding What Life is About: Storytelling with Tom McCallum* (2010); and 4) *How the Spirit Moves with Albert Desjarlais* (2011). She also produced a website with 170+ Elder storytelling video clips that help Elders share stories in Michif language – [ourelderstories.com](http://ourelderstories.com) Here Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/Ourelderstories-2311334092287361>

**Jaro Malanowski B.A. – Credentials, experience and training**

Jaro Malanowski is an award-winning producer, director and writer who is passionate about engaging and immersive storytelling while exploring new ways of sharing those stories to audiences world-wide. He founded Avatar Media with the hope that media can not only entertain and enlighten, but spark innovation and inspire audiences to new levels. Jaro has a degree from the University of Alberta in English and Art and Design. He has extensive experience in digital production and marketing of film and media using social media, websites, advertising, and

promotion. To reach audiences around the world, he has formed international partnerships which include rebranding for different markets and languages in both traditional approaches and new social media techniques.

### **Andrea Menard, Songkeeper, Musician and Performer**

Internationally-renowned singer-songwriter Andrea Menard is an accomplished Métis song keeper, speaker and actress. With four award-winning albums released, Andrea continues to create music with deep roots to her ancestors. Andrea co-wrote and starred in “The Velvet Devil,” a jazzy one-woman musical, which toured across Canada and was made into a made-for-television movie for the CBC. Her symphony show, called “I am Andrea Menard” debuted with the Regina Symphony Orchestra in 2014. She also wrote and starred in a 70-minute holiday special, called “Sparkle” for APTN. In support of her TEDx talk called “Silent No More,” Andrea recorded her new single, Silent No More, to end violence against Indigenous women. Honouring her lineage as a Song Keeper, Andrea uses her music to bring a positive message to the world. Andrea Menard shares her music from roots in Manitoba and growing up on the prairies and her current location in Vancouver though she creates and records her music mainly in Edmonton.

### **Tom McCallum, White Standing Buffalo - Elder and Storyteller**

Tom McCallum, White Standing Buffalo, is a well-known Elder, Sundance lodge keeper, eloquent Michif speaker, healer and traditional teacher and impassioned advocate for the Michif language. He works as an Elder and healer in the federal corrections system, aiding male inmates make their way to cultural practices and creating new lives. He also tours and speaks with his daughter in many Metis and First Nations communities, bring lively and heartfelt messages of love, understanding, and support to people on their healing journeys. His positive and uplifting messages bring hopefulness and encourage restorative practices for the mind, body, spirit and emotion. Tom is well known in his home community of Ile a la crosse and in the Vancouver region where he resides but also in many parts of British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan where he regularly speaks and shares wisdom. He has an international following and local and regional supports for his Sundance which brings traditional healing practices to established and new Sundancers. Tom encourages new people to take part in his ceremonies. Tom also is one of only a few practitioners today who facilitate Star Lodge ceremonies and the many benefits of these lodges.

## Director’s Statement:

I am fascinated by language and how essential it is to the human condition. For more than 20 years I have been working with Métis Elders whose goal is to revitalize Michif language – a threatened language like so many other Indigenous languages around the globe. Today, fewer than 2% of Métis people can speak Michif. Most of these are age 65 or over.

While living in Toronto a number of years ago, I learned to sing with Anishnawbe women. I learned words and phrases through their songs. From this experience, I began to realize that learning Michif, the language of my nation, could be facilitated through song. Stories and songs are vital in understanding the culture and language of any Indigenous nation.

This film draws on the knowledge and wisdom of Elder storytelling to stimulate pride in Michif language and culture. It draws on one songkeeper whose strength and commitment as a singer and song writer carries culture and language in her songs. The film shares the development of a new Michif-language song for language learning.

Music and storytelling create emotional connections and meaningful experiences which support language learning. Stories of the Elder and the new song combine to lead the viewer on a joyful journey of resilience of the Métis. Viewers can visit the website and Facebook page to learn more.

## Credits

Wesaketewenowuk: Roots Growing Up	PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH
WRITER/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER <b>JUDY ISEKE</b>	<b>TELUS STORYHIVE</b>
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY/EDITOR <b>JARO MALANOWSKI</b>	PRODUCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF
COMPOSER <b>ANDREA MENARD</b>	<b>EDMONTON HERITAGE COUNCIL GRANT</b>
ELDER <b>TOM MCCALLUM</b>	

BOXART



IMAGES



TEAM



Judy Iseke  
Producer, Writer, Director



Jaro Malanowski  
Director Photography/Editor



Andrea Menard  
Music

## Wesaketewenowuk SONG LYRICS – (Michif/English)

Oma Ota ninipawin - here I stand before you.  
Ekihci temoyan - In all my pride (highest form of thinking)  
Nestanan oma ipimatisiyahk - Completing the circle of creation  
Wesaketewenowuk - we are the roots growing up

### Vocables:

Way hey ya hey ya  
Way ha hey ha yo hey  
Way ha hey hi yo  
Way ha hey hi yo  
Weesah kotee wee no wuk

Michif pikiskwewin oma kihcihtakwan - The Michif language is sacred  
Takiskimsoyahk - to know ourselves  
atayohketak – let's tell our stories  
Kantohtenow acimowin - We will listen to the stories

### Vocables:

Way hey ya hey ya  
Way ha hey ha yo hey  
Way ha hey hi yo  
Way ha hey hi yo

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