



by **Paula E. Kirman**

Marie Rose Delorme Smith, a Métis woman born during the fur trade era, was a writer, mother, and historian. She lived with pride, despite a life filled with many challenges. She was sold by her mother to a much older robe and whiskey trader for \$50 at the age of 16, and went on to raise 17 children, establish a boarding house, and publish articles about ranching.

The way in which Marie Rose negotiated her identity during the changing times around her is depicted in Doris Jeanne MacKinnon's *The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith: Portrait of a Métis Woman, 1861-1960*.

MacKinnon first learned of Marie Rose during her graduate studies under the supervision of Dr. Donald B. Smith. Her studies focused on post-

Confederation Canadian history with a specialization in Aboriginal women.

"Dr. Smith shared my interest in biography, and he suggested I read *Fifty Dollar Bride*, which was published in the 1970s by Marie Rose's granddaughter, Jock Carpenter. That book led me to the Glenbow Alberta Institute Archives in Calgary, which holds Marie Rose's manuscripts," she explains.

MacKinnon also conducted research at various other regional archives and at Library and Archives Canada, and connected with several of Marie Rose's family members.

"It is clear from her papers that Marie Rose had a desire to publish her manuscripts, but she was not able to do that. Her family recognized the value of her personal papers and ensured that they would be made available to researchers," says MacKinnon.

Included in the book is an extensive bibliography, a genealogical chart, detailed notes, and a comprehensive index, which makes the book a valuable resource for researchers, educators, and

for Métis people conducting their own genealogical research.

"While aspects of her history were not unique in the sense that many Aboriginal families forged connections with fur traders by arranging marriages, the fact that Marie Rose wrote about her experiences, and that we can access those writings today is very unusual," she says.

MacKinnon found that Marie Rose was a complex character.

"While on the one hand she openly admitted that she was sold for \$50 in a transaction that left her few options except to obey her mother and new husband, she also demonstrated a great deal of agency and initiative by achieving a position as a respected pioneer of southern Alberta," MacKinnon says.

Despite her remarkable life and achievements, Marie Rose is not well known. That is soon to change, as her story offers much to readers.

"Marie Rose's story is not about one of the traditional well-known historical characters. Rather it is the story of an

ordinary woman who achieved many extraordinary things. She was a medicine woman, midwife, homesteader, and she embraced her roles as mother, folk historian, and pioneer of the plains," says MacKinnon.

"I want readers to recognize that there are many fascinating stories about women like Marie Rose which have not yet been told." ♦

The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith: Portrait of a Métis Woman, 1861-1960

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