



## ***Ni'NOXSOLA***

Elders in Residence Program  
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

Sheila Buchanan  
Metis Fiddle



The Metis fiddle music is incredibly unique. Certain tunes must be played on a certain key. I believe it is to the key of B.

The Red River jig is the one tune played in that key and there is usually a pause before it is played due to this. The fiddler must change keys, once it's done, he has to put it back to its regular state.

The Metis have a problem sitting still when a fiddle starts to play. Young and old enjoy this instrument. I for one grew up with it. We were a very musical family. My cousins played the fiddle and we all learned to play the guitar so we could take turns chording to the fiddle. We also learned to dance from this instrument. There were many different Metis dances played and we learned all of them. The metis know exactly which dance to perform just from the tune being played.

The Metis fiddle is incredibly unique in the sound it makes. There are no two fiddles alike. They all play the same tunes but may have different sounds. One would have to be an expert fiddler to know and understand the difference.

Metis fur traders would always carry a fiddle in their backpack. To wind down from a day's work, so they would play their fiddle. That was the only music available to them. They did not have a tv or a radio on their traplines. They would dance and play at the same time. It kept them warm dancing around the fire on cold winter evenings.

Fiddles have much more freedom in how they interpret a piece of music, unlike a classical violin which is very precise.



This is very brief description of a Metis fiddle. It is enjoyed by most people today and it is often found at old time dances, but a lot of other instruments have been added to enhance the tunes.

Sheila Buchanan (Kookum)