



Respect Works Here

Community Champion

Val Richards is a force whose passion, energy and commitment drive her on a quest to give voice to her ancestors who had to stay quiet suppressing their culture for fear of discrimination. Today, Val's voice is clear, honest and firm, resonating her truth and highlighting the importance of speaking on behalf of the Métis and the many people who have been silenced for far too long.

"Our history was hidden from us. I grew up eating moose meat and bannock. My mom made us mukluks and moccasins and taught us bead work, but our Métis heritage was never named," explains Val. "I knew for whatever reason, it was kept very quiet in the family. As I was growing up I got to know everything about my dad's Irish side of my family history, but I never heard about my mom's side."

"Because of the history of the Métis people, it was a very common experience that I had," says Val. "My history was hidden from me. Métis people were discriminated against for not being enough Indian and not enough White. You weren't enough of anything to really belong. It was often not safe to identify who you were."

"When I started to learn about the history of my people, it made sense why it was hidden from me and it made sense that I was missing parts of myself. I didn't feel like I fit or belonged until I started finding out exactly where I came from, and where my mother came from."

"When I realised why my mom didn't have a voice, I made it my business to be that voice, not just for myself and for my children, but also for my mom and my ancestors, who couldn't speak their truth. I take a lot of pride in being able to speak for my grandmothers before me."

Val is a strong advocate for the Métis community. She worked for 11 years as a Roots practitioner with Métis Community Services Society (MCSS), reconnecting Métis children and youth in foster care with their Métis families, communities and culture. Her work was extremely challenging and satisfying and she is truly proud of being a strong advocate for youth and of effecting change on behalf of children, within the Ministry of Children and Family Development. She is still a Board Member with MCSS and is also a board member of the Vernon and District Métis Association.

Val is also the Métis representative on the Aboriginal Advisory Committees for School District 22 and for Okanagan College and UBC-O.

While living in Kelowna, a Métis Elder kept advising that her 'home was in Lumby'. Eventually she took his advice and moved there in 2014 with her husband. She accepted a position with White Valley Community Resource Centre and currently offers counselling and family support services there.

“None of what I do is in isolation of others. I have an incredibly supportive husband and 8 children and I have worked and do work with some amazing Elders, other individuals and teams.”

~ Val Richards

"There is a significant Métis and First Nation community in the area and there was an opportunity for me to offer a different kind of service. My practice is grounded in Aboriginal traditions and I am able to offer different modalities of healing to community members which they may have not had access to before."

For Val, identifying as a particular Indigenous group is important to support the leadership that is fighting hard for recognition of the Métis.

"It is important to establish that there are many of us that identify as Métis, that live a certain lifestyle because of our roots and our connection to the land. We need to reclaim who we are."

