

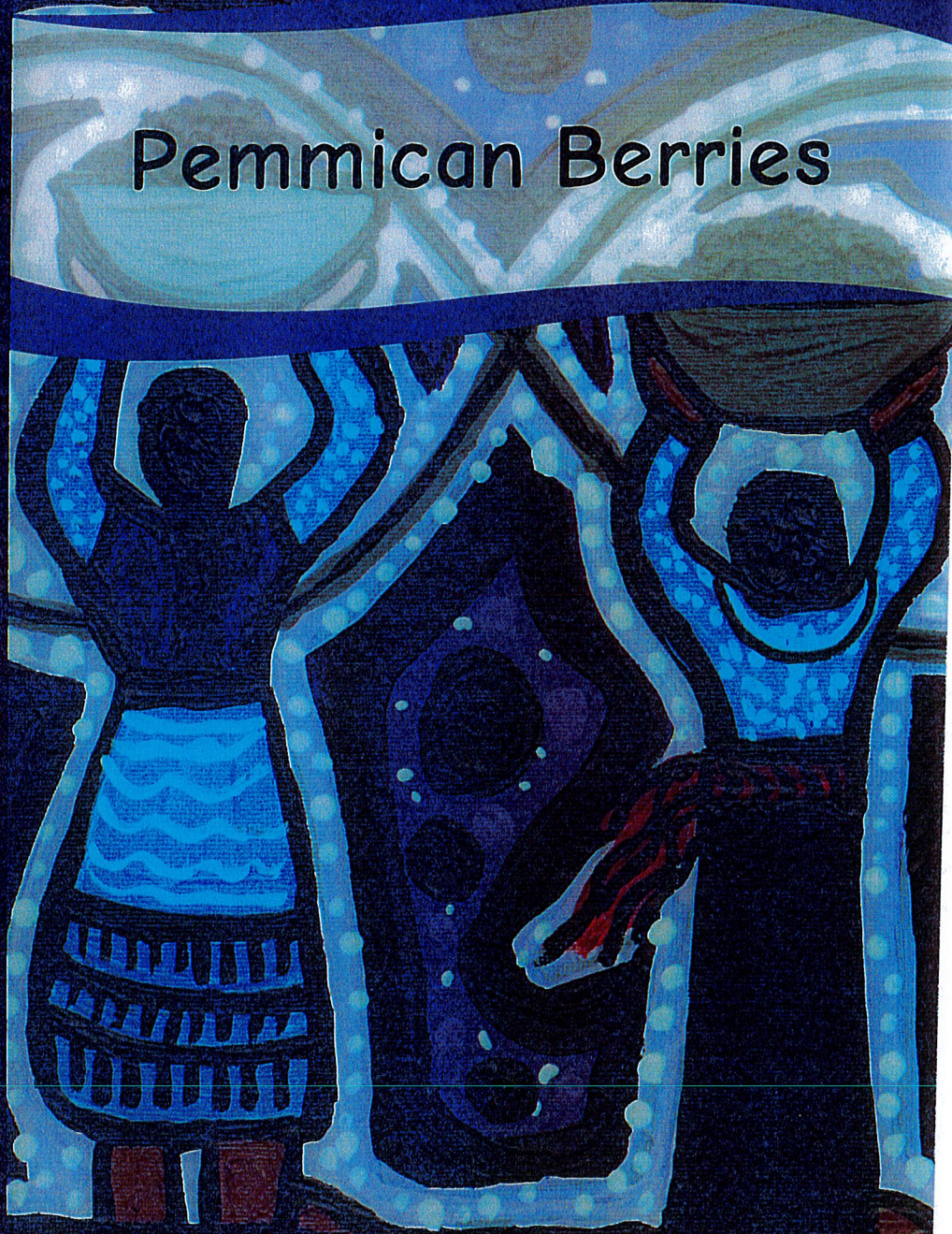


Métis Series

# Pemmican Berries

Strong Stories

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## The Métis People

The prairie is a place of many gifts. Its hills, river valleys, and coulees are rich with brilliant colours of different prairie berries. Long ago, during the years of the fur trade, Métis people developed many cultural principles. It was during this time that we made our living from the land that we call our home. We were aware of taking care of the land, as the land provided us with what we needed to survive. At the time, Métis families used every prairie berry to survive.

The time when the buffalo hunt was important to the people of the prairies is called “the pemmican days.” Today, we make pemmican in the same way as our ancestors did in those long ago days. To make pemmican we harvest two types of purple berries—chokecherry and saskatoon berries. Chokecherries hang in long clusters and are easier to harvest in large amounts than saskatoon berries.



Long ago, pemmican was our staple food for hundreds of years. It was made with dried and crushed buffalo meat mixed with grease and dried berries. We made buffalo pemmican for our own family to use and we traded the rest to the local fur trade companies in order to buy different goods for our family household.

Pemmican was also very important for European settlers during the long, hard winters on the prairies because of its high nutritional value. During this same time, it was used as a form of money that was traded in 90 pound bags. Each bag was called a "taureau."

Today, we still make pemmican but it is no longer a staple food. It is now considered a superfood and can be purchased in stores.



## Being Careful

We are taught by the Elders to wash our berries and dry them in the hot sun and warm wind. These elements naturally clean and preserve our berries. Chokecherries need heat to dry properly.

The ripe, dark purple chokecherry is safe to eat off the tree. However, our Elders tell us that if we swallow too many chokecherry seeds we will get an upset stomach. The seeds can be poisonous in large amounts if they are not pounded. The Elders teach us to always pound chokecherries to crush the seeds making them safe for eating.

Once our chokecherry berries are sundried on flour sacks or hides, our families crush them with pounding stones to make meal. These pounding stones are passed down through the generations. Our Cree ancestors called the chokecherry the "berry that is crushed" because they, too, pounded the berries to make pemmican.



## We Give Thanks

As Métis people, our pemmican berries are special to us. We highly respect these gifts of nature. We are grateful for the land and resources, which keep us healthy, strong, and independent!

