

UNTITLED

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My experience as a mixed-raced girl echoes my grandfather's experience as a Métis. I've grown up with some similar experiences as my Métis ancestors. Being half black, half white, I find myself sometimes conflicted between two cultures, two races, two identities.

I remember being a 12-year-old girl, my hair brushed by my mother into meat pigtails. I remember walking out of drama class seriously considering bleaching my skin. I remember wanting to fit in with my all-white friend groups.

At the same time, I felt like the lightest shade of pale around my Black family. My grandfather experienced the same. He was Native and French, two cultures that were hated in 1950s Winnipeg.

He had to choose one race because he didn't want to get twice the beatings, so he chose French and struggled with denial.

Even when his sons and daughters confronted him with documents, evidence of his Native identity, he denied it till the day he died.

Looking from a distance, I see what my grandfather went through, and with that distance, I don't blame his choice to pass.

I'm proud of my Native ancestry and thank my ancestors for all that they've given and given up, for me. There's been a lot of change for the Métis community since the 50s, and I no longer want to change the color of my skin, but, still I wonder, if someone had the choice today to hide their Native identity, would they do it?