



# Moccasins



## Moccasins

Rita Marten does not take “rocking her mocs” for granted. She lived through a time where she was not allowed to wear the moccasins her mother lovingly made for her.

One day during International Rock Your Mocs week this year (November 9-16th) Rita shared an experience she had as a young girl. Her mother had made her some beautiful beaded moccasins. They were created to provide her comfort and pride in her culture, and to remind her of who she is and where she comes from, and of all the Sakaw Iyiniwak women who came before her.

When Rita wore her moccasins to the residential school they were taken from her and locked away until it was time to go home at the end of the school semester. This is devastatingly symbolic of the way children were stripped of their comforts, culture, and the love of their parents while they attended residential schools.

The absence of the moccasins did not mean that Rita forgot about her mother’s love, her culture, and the skills that women in her family had passed down for generations, and continue to pass down today.

Rita survived, and she always rocks her mocs in celebration of her heritage, and with the knowledge of how powerful an act it is. In addition to that, Rita made a special pair of moccasins for her grandson, and he was so proud to wear them to school.

Mikisew Iyiniwak iskwewak have long clothed their people with beautiful textiles that represent the spirit of their culture, and all of their relations; from the moose that provides the hide, to the colours and patterns that are reflected in the beadwork and other decorations embellishing practical clothing and footwear. There are women in the Mikisew Cree First Nation who have made moccasins for every person in the community that has passed away so that they are sent off on their next journey with this important item lovingly covering their feet. Elder Maria Houle is one of these women, and other women in Mikisew Cree First Nation will continue on this tradition.

Moccasins represent much more than just footwear to Rita Marten and her relatives. They represent culture, the talent and ingenuity of women, the connection between relatives, and the connection to all our relations.

