

Best All Round

By Tanya Semple

One bright day in 1919,
On the dusty Sugar Cane reserve,
Was born a young man named Louie Bates,
A drover with steel for nerve.

This First Nations boy showed talent and grit;
An exceptional horseman was he.
Ranching and Rodeo, he did it all
As the toughest cowboy to beat.

Just three creeks down from wild Willy's Lake,
On that trampled Old Cariboo Road,
At One-Hundred-Forty-One-Mile House,
His workmanship never slowed.

No doubt, this young man had talent to spare;
Some thought he could speak with the horses.
Then as fast as you'd say, "By gosh, I've struck gold!"
He was drafted by the Armed Forces.

There's no need to fret; our Louie was strong.
As a war hero, he returned.
But First Nations veterans paid a heavier price;
His Indian status was burned.

Not one to be beat, he moved on with life,
Flowing freely with the dust and the cattle.
He married a nice girl from Soda Creek;
You can bet he was back in the saddle.

By this time a legend in the highest demand,
Horse trainer and rodeo star.
Saddle bronc, bareback, steer riding, roping;
Trained on race tracks near and far.

When our boy Louie hit the stampedes,
Praise and fame did abound.
And when he passed, his gravestone read:
"Cowboy, Best All Round".