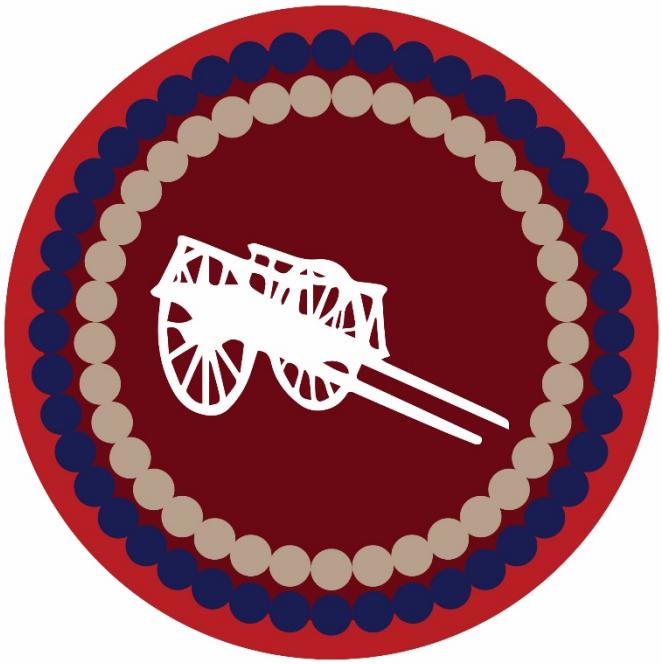
Homeland History

Foundational Knowledge Theme

Rupertsland Institute
Métis Centre of Excellence

A publication of Rupertsland Institute



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Languages of Métis

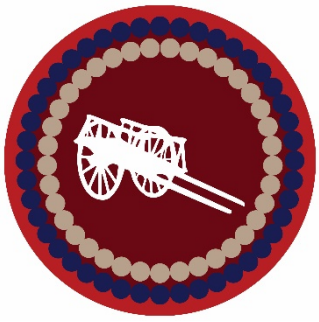
Métis Culture & Traditions

Métis in Alberta

Homeland History

Métis Nation Governance

Introduction to Homeland History



Across the Métis Homeland are histories of resilience, strength, self-governance, and hope. Métis legacy is rooted in the fur trade and foundational to resistance against colonization. This theme shares Métis history from a place of strength, reflecting the way the people know themselves, and empowering educators with a reflective engagement of Métis history.

All RCTL resources have been carefully developed by RLI's team of Métis educators.

From 2018 - 2021, RLI worked closely with Métis leaders, knowledge keepers, and community members to produce five Foundational Knowledge Themes to support educators as they grow in their understanding of authentic Métis history, stories, and perspectives.

The Foundational Knowledge Themes are a set of living documents.

RCTL will provide periodic updates to the document to ensure that Métis voices and stories are represented in the most accurate way.

Please ensure you are referring to the most current version.

If you have something you would like considered for contribution or have feedback,

please contact education@rupertsland.org

Rupertsland Institute (RLI) is an affiliate of the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) and is incorporated as a not-for-profit organization under the Alberta Companies Act. The Métis Nation of Alberta assigned RLI mandates in education, training, and research.

Rupertsland Centre for Teaching and Learning (RCTL) was established in 2018 under RLI's Education mandate. The Education Team at RCTL develops Métis-centric comprehensive foundational knowledge resources, engaging lesson plans, meaningful professional development opportunities and authentic classroom learning tools that support all learners in all levels of education.

In particular, RCTL is committed to empowering educators to develop and apply foundational knowledge about Métis for the benefit of all students, as outlined in Alberta Education's Leadership Quality Standard (LQS) and Competency #5 of the Teaching Quality Standard (TQS).

All RCTL resources have been carefully crafted by RLI's team of Métis educators. RLI works closely with Métis leaders, knowledge keepers, and community members to produce resources that accurately present authentic Métis voices and stories in education. The staff at Rupertsland Institute are honoured that members of the Métis Nation in Alberta have determined RLI to be a trustworthy voice to share Métis stories in a meaningful, respectful way.

With support from many Métis and non-Métis educators, students, and others, the three leaders from Rupertsland Institute's K-12 Education Team have been primary contributors to the development of the Foundational Knowledge Themes.

Visit our website for more information, classroom resources, and more:
http://www.rupertsland.org/teaching-learning/

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Lisa Cruickshank

Lisa is a proud member of the Métis Nation of Alberta. Lisa has worked in the K-12 system for 20 years in various capacities such as Elementary Educator, Indigenous Education Consultant, Provincial Curriculum Development, and is currently the Director for Métis Education and Lifelong learning at Rupertsland Institute. Lisa is passionate and committed to advancing Métis education across the province and building capacity with Métis educators.

Billie-Jo Grant

Billie-Jo Grant is a strong Métis mother, educator, and leader who inspires others to have tough conversations and learn more to do better for ALL students. Her goal is to ensure that authentic Métis education is commonplace to guarantee that Métis are no longer the "forgotten people."

Kimberley Fraser-Airhart

Kimberley is a Métis woman from amiskwaciy-wâskahikan (Edmonton, AB). In Spring 2018, she began working with RLI as a primary author of the Foundational Knowledge Themes. Guided by stories and wisdom from her Métis community, Kimberley is passionate about addressing systemic injustices so that all students can see themselves in their education.

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Published in loving memory of Cecil Bellrose, a beloved father, grandfather, great-grandfather, husband, brother, and uncle in the Métis Nation. His legacy of leadership, kindness, and pride will not be forgotten.

A Letter from Alberta Métis Education Council

The publication of these themes for Métis education is the culmination of years of collaboration between the brilliant educators at Rupertsland Institute for Métis Excellence, the Alberta Métis Education Council (AMEC), and the Métis people of this province. We, the members of AMEC, are writing this letter to share with you our joy at the release of these materials. To help you understand, we need to share a little story…

It was a dream come true. In a few short years, the line item on a strategic work plan for the first-ever Associate Director, Métis Education, calling for a collective voice in Métis education had become a reality. Thanks to visionary leadership from Lorne Gladu, our CEO at Rupertsland Institute, the first advisory members were now seated around a conference table. The jagged mountain view out the Banff Centre windows was breathtaking yet the vision that was unfolding at the first meeting of the Alberta Métis Education Council was just as impressive. Over the next five years, this new council would meet regularly to carry out the urgent business of advocating for Métis education in Alberta. We met in different locations around the province, reinforcing the importance of place and honouring our diversity across the province. Our Council welcomed Ms. Betty Letendre, a well-respected *keytayak* (say: kay-tah-yahk) from the Edmonton region, who offered her thoughtful guidance on how to honour our people through spiritual and cultural traditions passed on from our ancestors. As we met in these places, feeling the traces of our ancestors and land's memory, we knew that it was now our responsibility to revitalize our history and our stories through our roles as Métis educators. With our vision of self-determination guiding us, our group emerged with a set of themes representing what we felt was important for others to know about us as Métis people living in Alberta.

This kind of intellectual sovereignty is a reflection of our ability to govern ourselves and to set out the priorities for our people. In saying so, we hearken back to one of the names for the Métis People, *otipemisiwak*, which means those who govern themselves. The work that is done in these themes begins with Métis ways of knowing, being, and doing as a foundation. Shaping resources and materials for educators, in partnership to build better understandings of the Métis in this province, is an undertaking that moves together with building healthy futures for Métis People in this province.

In looking back at how our vision of Métis education came to be, our insistence that Métis people will determine our vision of Métis education through our collective efforts and talents has remained our guiding vision. In respecting our traditional ways, we honour our ancestors; in respecting our present circumstances, we honour our resilience; and in respecting our educational efforts, we honour our future generations.

It is our tremendous honour to witness the fruition of this dream.

Preston Huppie

Alberta Métis Education Council

Preston Huppie (MEd), Council Chair: Indigenous Education/Learning Leader, Calgary Board of Education
Dr. Yvonne Poitras Pratt (PhD): Professor, University of Calgary
Dr. Cindy Swanson (PhD): Teacher, Edmonton Public Schools
Kimberley Brown (MEd): Online Teacher, North Star Academy
Dr. Aubrey Hanson (PhD): Professor, University of Calgary
Erin Reid (MEd): Indigenous Literacy Consultant, Edmonton Catholic Schools
Adam Browning (PhD candidate): Director of Learning, Palliser Regional Schools

Letter of Support from Métis Nation of Alberta

Dear Fellow Education Partners,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter to support Rupertsland Institute's (RLI) publication of Foundational Knowledge Themes from the Education Division. I would like to thank the RLI Education Team for its vision in putting together a publication of Foundational Knowledge Themes to advance Métis Education in Alberta. These themes encompass the elements of "UNDRIP" and moving towards fruition under articles 14 & 15 whereas: "***Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information (15).***" In addition, this work reflects the *Calls to Action* #62, where "***We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to … create age-appropriate curriculum on "Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contributions to Canada."*** Through the sharing of accurate Métis historical and contemporary stories within these themes, the Métis Nation of Alberta is supported in its institutional capacity toward self-government.

Most importantly, I see the value of informing and teachers and all educators about the Métis Nation and how education is critical to reconciliation. It is our desire that Métis citizens and all people finally learn about the rightful place of the Métis Nation and its role in Canadian history. With the implementation of Métis Education in Alberta, our Métis children understand their distinct culture and history, and the key role that the Métis people have played in the development of Canada. I am very proud of Rupertsland Centre for Teaching and Learning and its role in developing comprehensive Métis authentic education lesson plans with engaging resources for all learners in Alberta. Métis history and heritage play a large role in the history of Canada, and it is important that all learners have access and benefit from Métis education.

Since, acquiring the K-12 mandate in 2012, RLI has had huge success under the *MNA-GOA Framework Agreement*. RLI has also demonstrated effective and accountable governance and positive productive relationships, which are two key business plan goals of the Métis Nation of Alberta.

I am very thankful to the large group of knowledge keepers including past and current MNA Provincial Council members, and senior Métis Nation staff that have taken such a huge interest and have passionately shared their extensive knowledge to ensure that the five foundational knowledge themes are accurate.

These themes will have a positive impact on all teachers' pedagogical approaches to incorporating Métis educationin their classrooms. Métis students will see themselves in their school settings and the classroom and learn the true history from the Métis perspective of historical and contemporary events. Most importantly Métis learners will identify with the strength of their Nation, and this will serve to enhance their sense of identity and will support pride in who they are and where they come from.

Sincerely,

Audrey Poitras

President Audrey Poitras

Acknowledgements

The Métis Nation of Alberta is an Indigenous organization that passionately serves and cares for its people. The creation of these resources would not have been possible without the incredible support from many determined scholars, leaders, educators, and community members who are committed to seeing a strong, positive future for the Métis Nation. They are committed to ensuring that the Métis story is told accurately so that their children can live free, empowered futures as Métis Nation citizens.

The dedication and tenacious vision of the **Alberta Métis Education Council** led to the establishment of this project.

Marsee

(say: mar-see)

kininanaskomitinawaw

(say: ki-na-na-skohm-tih-nah-wow)

The Education Team at RCTL would like to thank the Rupertsland Institute Executive Team, its many supportive and encouraging colleagues, and the skilled RCTL staff that contributed through 2019, 2020, and 2021: **Jerome Chabot, Christina Hardie, Kate Gillis, Julia Callioux, Rylee Sargeant, Michelle Bowditch, Jillian Ekeberg, Kendell Semotiuk** and **Sonia Houle**.

Project development has been graciously supported by the affiliates of MNA. RLI thanks **Métis Crossing** and **Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research** for their support.

Thank You

It has been an honor to work closely with the **Provincial Archives of Alberta, the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, Fort Vermillion Heritage Society, Lac La Biche Historical Society, the Archives of Manitoba, the Glenbow Archives,** and the **Musée Heritage Museum** throughout the development of this project. Partnering with them to locate and share the stories of the Métis community that are in their care has been instrumental in telling the Métis story. RCTL also thanks Kel Pero and her team for their editing services.

Several leaders and community members from the **Métis Nation of Alberta** have strengthened this project in innumerable ways. RLI received support, research material, unique insights, and a variety of resources from many who work for the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Marsee nititwan

(say: mar-see nih-tih-twahn)

This resource has been developed in close partnership with experienced leaders who have served the Métis Nation throughout their entire lives. Our team is beyond grateful for the knowledge, wisdom, and resilient passion that the **Theme Review Group** has invested in this project.

President Audrey Poitras
Vice-President Daniel Cardinal
Brenda Bourque-Stratichuk
Karen Collins
Bev New
Cecil Bellrose
Marilyn Lizee
Norma Spicer

Merci

(say: mayr-see)

There have been many community members who have supported the development of this project by sharing insights, stories, photos, ideas, connections, and more with RCTL. They have shared their stories in a variety of publications, videos, and resources that have been essential in developing these Themes. The list of contributors below is in special thanks to those who shared their time and efforts to support educators in Alberta, and ultimately, Métis students.

Languages of Métis

Brenda Bourque-Stratichuk; Daniel Cardinal; Dorothy Thunder; Jerome Chabot; Les Skinner; and Lorne Gladu.

Métis Culture and Traditions

Audrey Poitras; Bev New; Billie-Jo Grant; Brianna Lizotte; Connie Kulhavy; Gabriel Daniels; Jerome Chabot; Karen Collins; Kimberley Fraser-Airhart; Lilyrose Meyers; Lisa Cruickshank; Marilyn née Wells, Underschultz/Lizee; Melissa Laboucane; Norma Spicer; Paul Gareau; Stephen Gladue; Terry Boucher; and Walter Andreef.

Homeland History

Billyjo DeLaRonde; Jason Mckay (Métis Nation-Saskatchewan); Marilyn née Wells, Underschultz/Lizee; Métis Nation Ontario; and Shannon Dunfield. As primary academic sources for this document, the Education Team would like to extend a special thanks to Adam Gaudry and Jean Teillet for their scholarship in Métis history.

Métis in Alberta

Bailey Oster; Billie-Jo Grant; Bev New; Brenda Bourque-Stratichuk, Bryan Fayant; Norma Spicer; Christina Hardie; Cindy Ziorio; Colette Poitras; Daniel Cardinal; Emile and Edna Blyan; Emma Grant; Doreen Bergum; Jason Ekeberg; Jillian Ekeberg; Joshua Morin; Karen Collins; Kate Gillis; Kelly Johnston; Kimberley Fraser-Airhart; Kisha Supernant; Linda Boudreau-Semaganis; Lizotte Napew; Lorne Gladu; Molly Swain; Norma Collins; Paul Bercier; Rylee Sargeant; Sharon Morin; Shari Strachan; Theo Peters; and Yvonne Poitras-Pratt.

Métis Nation Governance

Daniel Cardinal; Gabriel Daniels; Lorne Gladu; Marilyn née Wells, Underschultz/Lizee; Mary Wells; and Zachary Davis. As primary academic sources for this document, the Education Team would like to extend a special thanks to Adam Gaudry, Jean Teillet and Joe Sawchuk for their scholarship in Métis history and governance.

Who are the Métis?

Métis are a strong, Indigenous people who celebrate distinct kinship, traditions, languages, culture, politics, governance, and history. Métis are a collective of communities with a common sense of origin and destiny with kinship networks that span a historic homeland. [1] They share a common Métis nationalism that is distinct from other local identities.

Métis history begins with an ethnogenesis or emergence as a people and a Nation with a distinct ethnicity. Métis ethnicity has historical and ancestral connections to both First Nations and European relations. The unions between these two communities formed the first roots towards Métis nationhood. As communities of Métis people developed unique ways of being, doing, and knowing for themselves, they came together as a Métis Nation.

Understanding ethnogenesis as the origin of the Métis serves to counter the idea that Métis inherently means "mixed." It is important that educators not reduce Métis identity to mixedness. Métis ethnogenesis acknowledges the beginnings of First Nations and European ancestors coming together, but also that by the mid-1700s the Métis had already developed into a distinct community with their own culture, traditions, and language.

Today Métis celebrate not just their historical roots and ethnogenesis, but also their distinct history, thriving peoplehood and vibrant culture. RCTL's Foundational Knowledge Resources invites educators to understand and celebrate Métis spirit, history, and culture, and their resilience as a people and a Nation.

Terminology to Consider…

Aboriginal

A legal term identifying the individuals and communities who were the original inhabitants to lands that became Canada.

Bois-Brule (say: bwah broo-lay)

This term is from the French language and translates literally to "burnt wood." While originally the term had been used as a racially biased term, especially from the 18th to the 20th centuries, to refer to the diverse shades of skin color of Métis, it has been reclaimed by generations of Métis.

FNMI

An acronym often used to refer to the inclusion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives in a dialogue or in writing. This misleading reference erases the distinctions of each Aboriginal group and so is considered offensive by many.

Half-Breed

A racially biased and derogatory term used, especially in the early 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, to refer to people of mixed heritage, often describing their Indigenous and European ancestries.

Indian

A term introduced by Euro-Canadian settlers to refer to people and communities who have ancestral connection to the lands of North, Central, and South America – especially those in North America. In Canada today, 'Indian' remains a legal term, referencing First Nations people under the *Constitution Act* and *Indian Act*.

Indigenous

A recent term describing the identity, culture, or heritage of anyone whose ancestors traditionally occupied a territory that has been colonized. There are three groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. This term is better understood in Canada with the endorsement of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) in 2010.

Métis

This term has origins in the French language, translating to English as "mixed." During the ethnogenesis of the Métis Nation, the term Métis was used to describe the children of First Nations peoples and Euro-Canadian settlers. The generations who led the development of the Métis Nation reclaimed the term as a name for themselves. Today the term Métis properly refers to those who self-identify as Métis, are distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, are of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, and who are accepted by the Métis Nation.

Michif

A term used by the Métis to identify themselves as Indigenous people. The term is also the name of the distinct Indigenous language spoken by Métis.

Native

This term is used to associate someone or something with the place or circumstance of their origin. Some use it to refer to Aboriginal identity, but it does not account for distinct heritage, culture, or nationhood.

Otipemisiwak (say: oh-tih-pem-soo-wuk)

Another way of referencing Métis. The term is from the Cree language. It expresses the idea that the Métis lead, govern, care for, and own themselves. This was the name that the Cree kin of the Métis dedicated to them. Otipemisiwak is not fully understood in one English term or expression.

Pan-Indigenous

A way of referencing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit together as if they are one big group or Nation.

What is the Métis Homeland?

The Métis Nation has a generational Homeland that includes much of present-day Western Canada and northern sections of the United States. The specific areas include what is today: parts of southern Northwest Territories; parts of Ontario; Manitoba; Saskatchewan; Alberta; parts of British Columbia; parts of northern Montana; parts of North Dakota; and parts of Minnesota, USA.[2] Métis ancestry, history, culture, and languages are rooted in these lands.

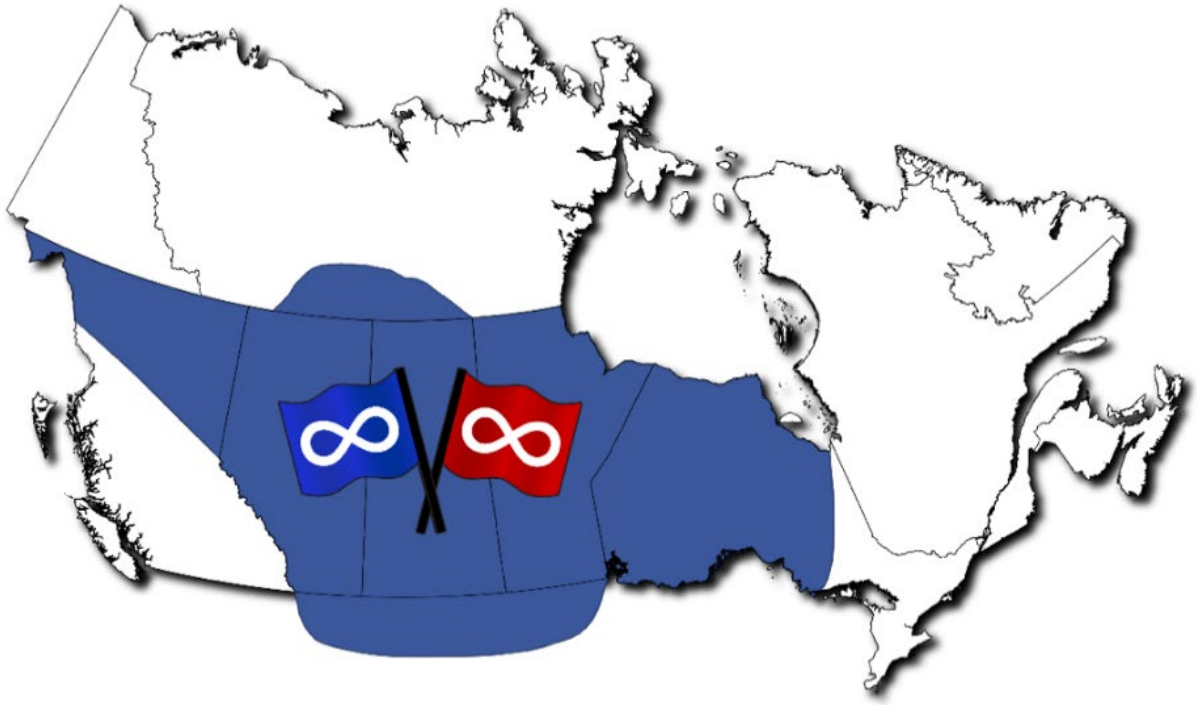
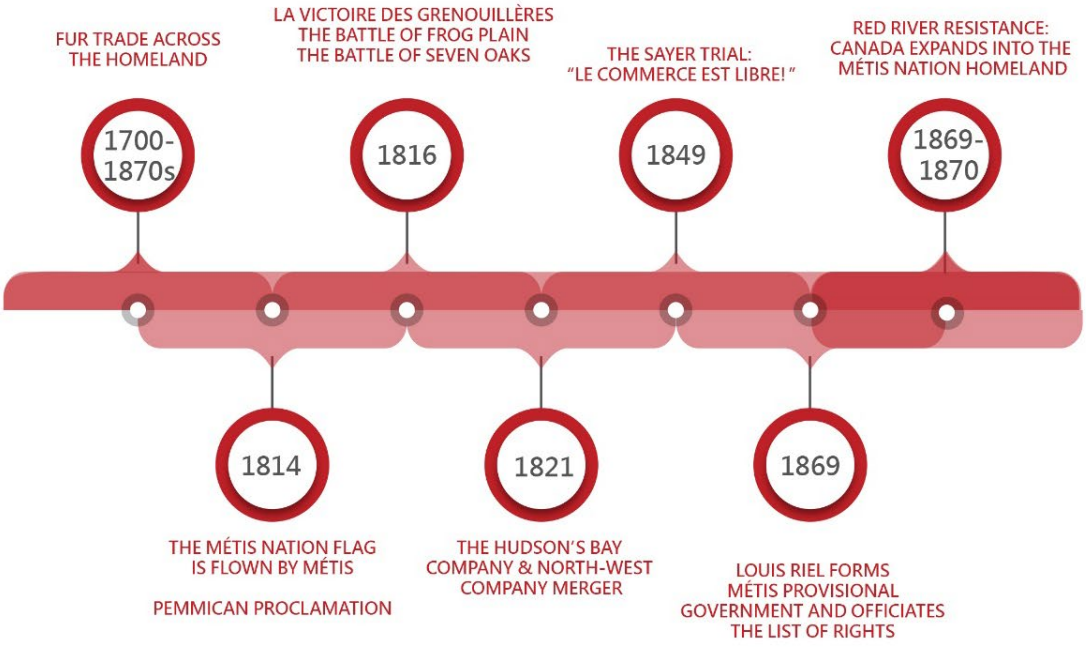
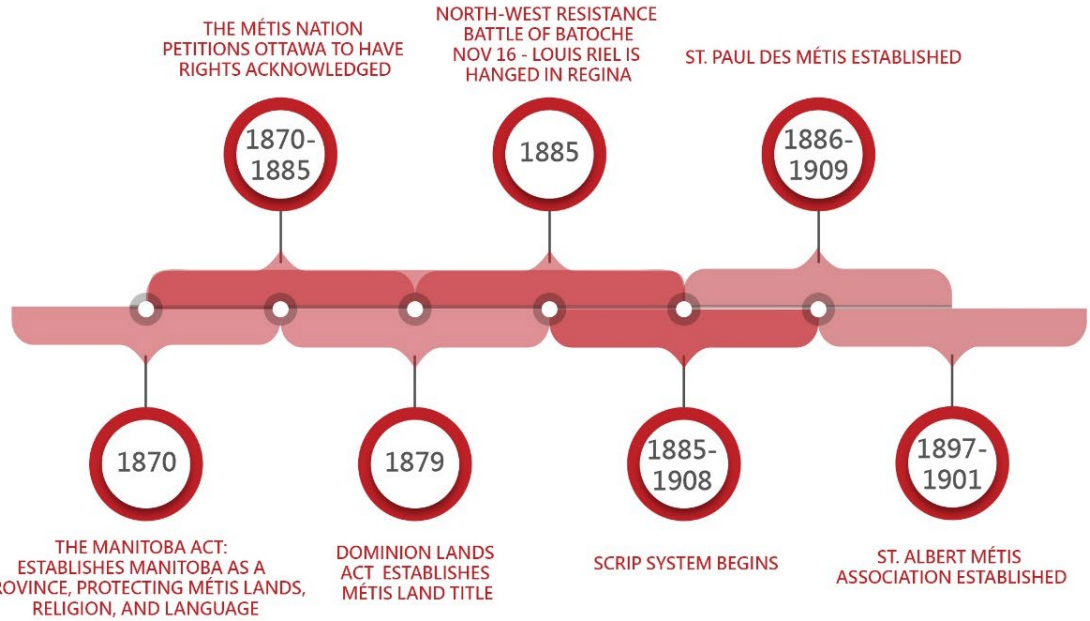


Figure 1 Métis Nation Homeland in Canada. Photo courtesy of the Métis Nation of Alberta, 2021.

A Timeline of Métis History

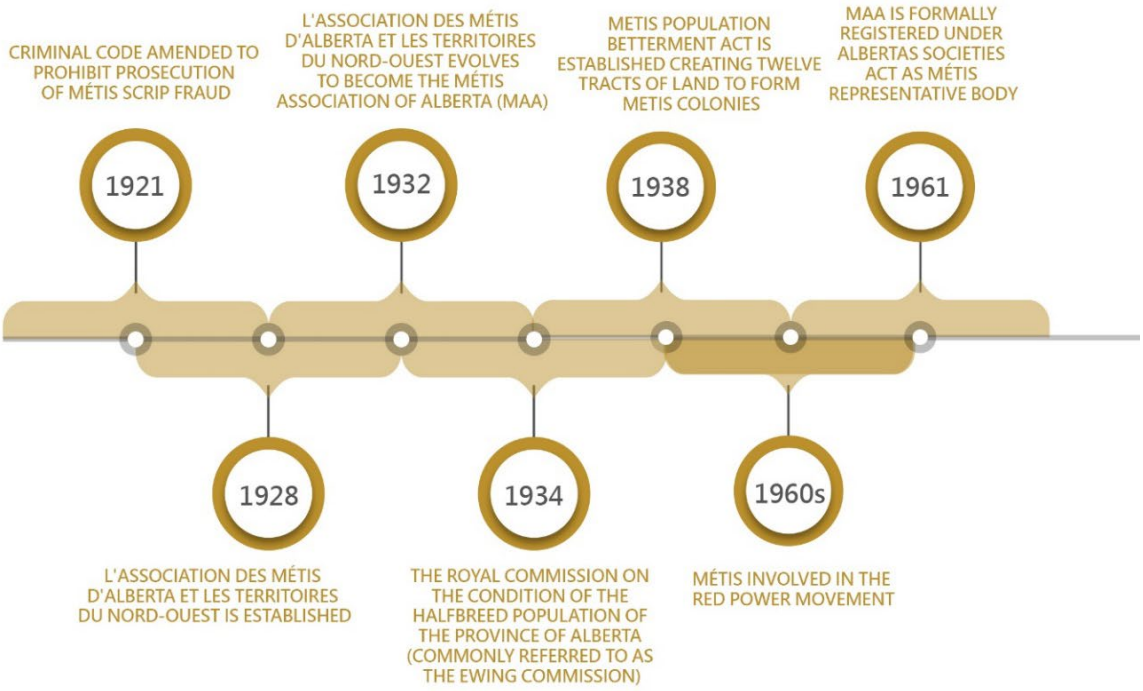
1800s

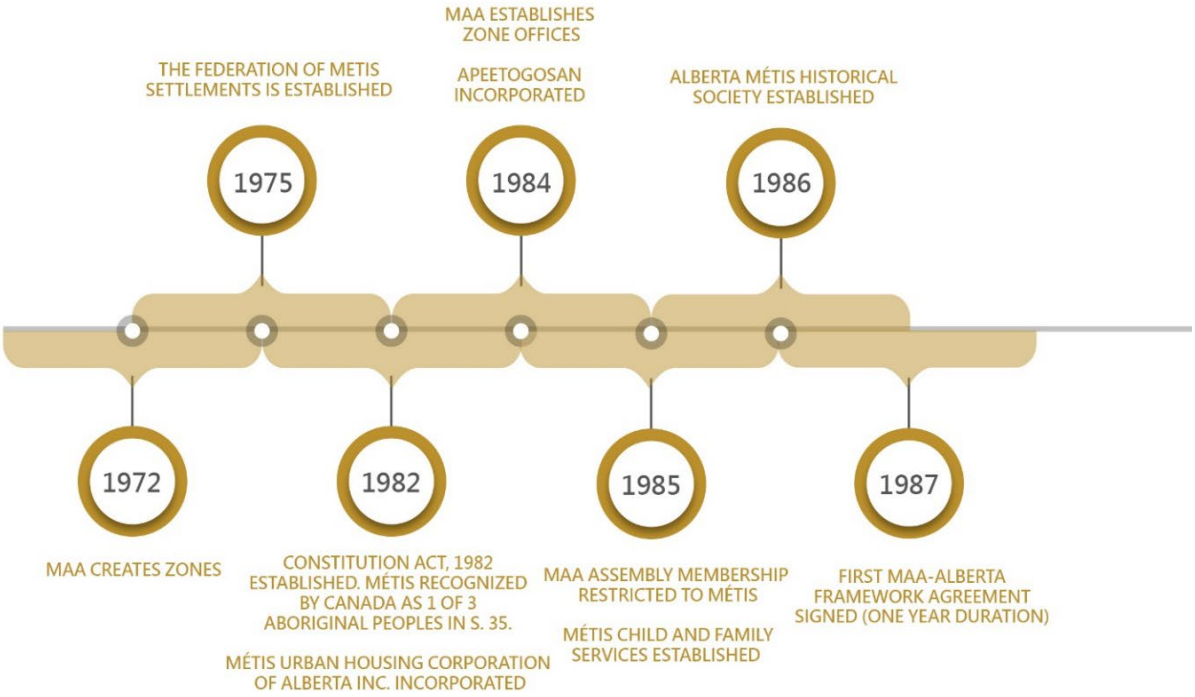




A Timeline of Métis History

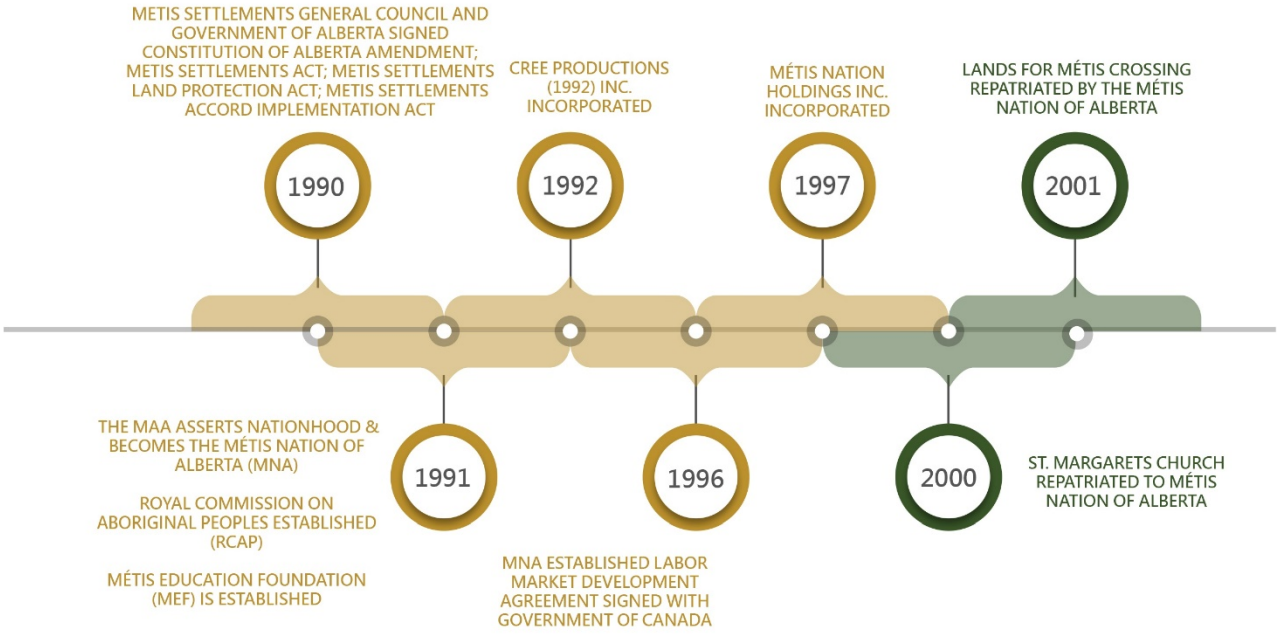
1900s

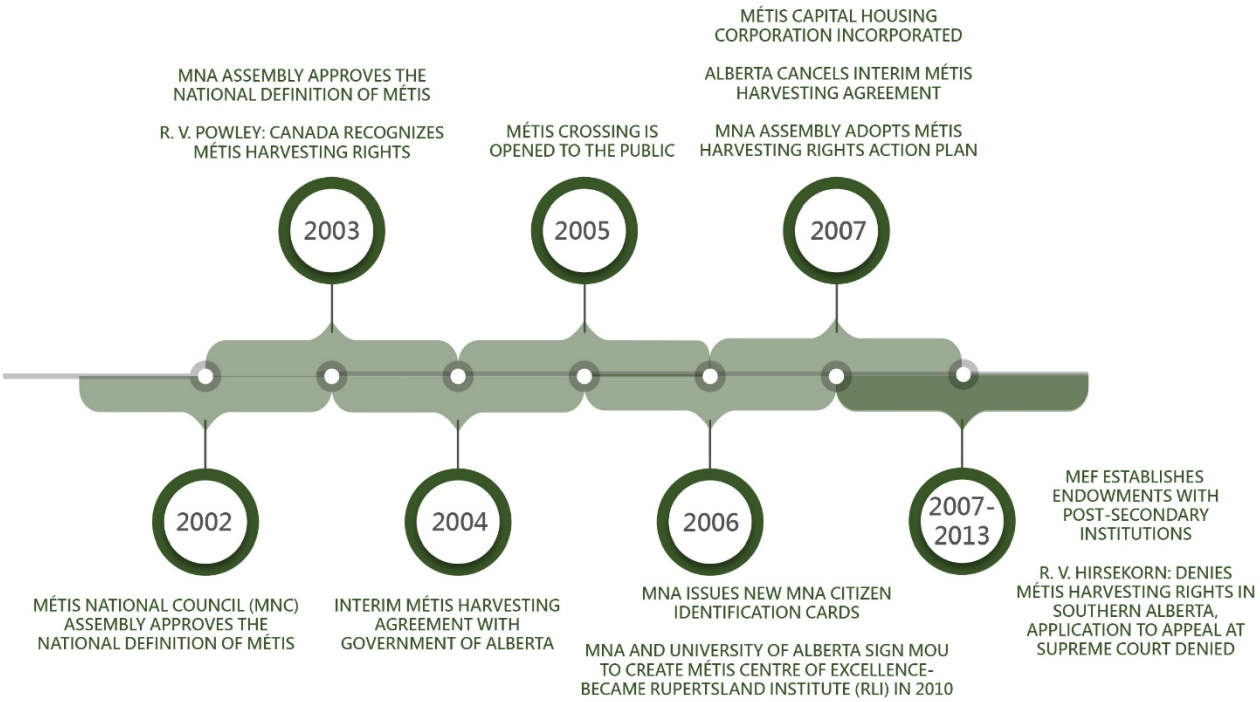




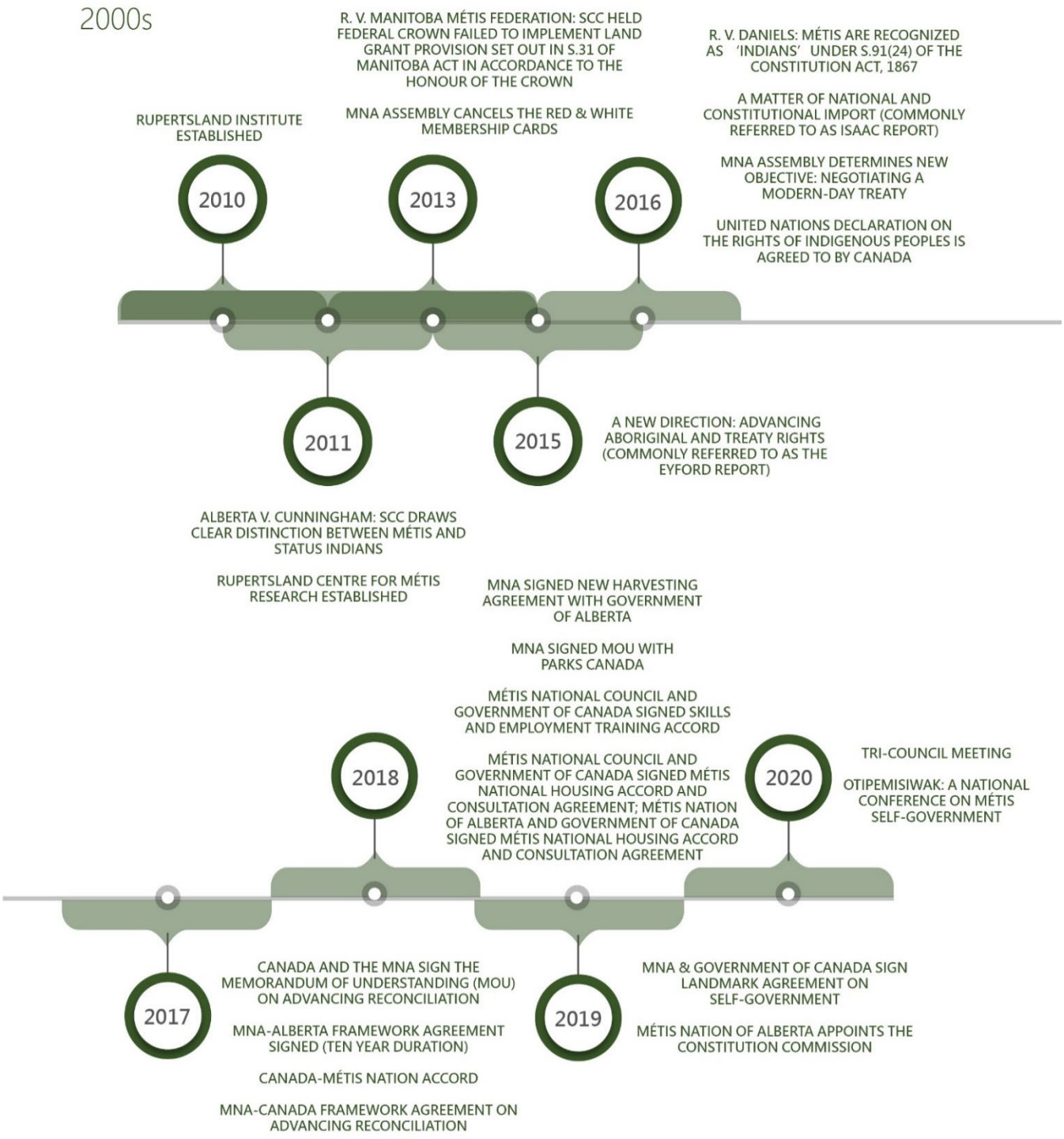
A Timeline of Métis History

1990s-2000s





A Timeline of Métis History



Homeland History Vocabulary List

Term	Definition
Aboriginal	Descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The peoples in Canada, according to Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, 1982, are inclusive of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Each group is distinct and has its own history, culture, protocols, traditions, and languages. Used as a term when referring to government documents.
Adaptability	The ability to adjust to different conditions or circumstances. People who are adaptable are open and willing to try new things.
Ancestor	A descendant in one's family lineage beyond grandparents.
Bannock	Made from flour, salt, baking powder, oil, water. Bannock can be baked, fried, or cooked over open flame. Check out the Rupertsland lesson plan "B is for Bannock" to make your own and learn more about this Métis tradition.
Battle of Seven Oaks	On June 9, 1816, this battle was the first time the Métis gathered and fought for their rights as a Nation. Also known as the Victory of the Frog Plain (See also: *la Victoire de la Grenouillère*, Victory of the Frog Plain).
Bois-Brulés	(say: bwa broo-lay) A French term that translates to “burnt wood.” Another name for the early Métis.
Blood Quantum	In the United States of America, this term is often used to refer to the amount of “North American Indian blood” an individual possesses. It is not a viable way to determine Métis identity or ancestry. The concept is founded in racist ideology and ultimately undermines Métis identity, culture, and sovereignty.
Chief Captain of the Hunt	A selected leader in the Métis buffalo hunt governance system. This was the highest position in buffalo hunt governance.
Clemency	A legal term recommending lenience or mercy at a trial.
Colonialism	The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial control over another country and/or Nation. This typically includes dominating the Indigenous peoples living there.
Community	A unified group of individuals; a group of people who share a living place or a common characteristic or identity. See also “Historic Métis Community.”

Constitution Act

The 1982 *Constitution Act* is a landmark document in Canadian history. It achieved full independence for Canada by allowing the country to change its Constitution without approval from Britain. For the Métis Nation, a critical part of the Constitution Act is Section 35 (1) and (2), which states the following:

"35. (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed."

"(2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada."

Convention of Forty

A group with twenty French-speaking and twenty English-speaking Red River residents. They formed the second provisional government, which better represented the rights and values of all residents in Red River.

Culture

Culture is the sum of the attitudes, customs and beliefs that distinguish one group of people from another. Métis culture, traditions, and history guide us today in all our endeavours as a Nation of people.

Customs

A way of doing something that is unique to a particular place, community, or time. These particular ways of behaving often have unique histories.

Cuthbert Grant

The first leader of the Métis of the early 19th century. Under his leadership, Métis asserted their nationhood and economic freedom when Canada attempted to control the trade of pemmican in 1814.

Dichotomy

(say: dye-cot-oh-me)

A division or contrast between two things that are, or are represented as, being opposed or entirely different.

Diplomacy

Dealing with people in a sensitive and tactful, or “politically correct,” way.

Displacement

The act or process of removing an item, individual or group from their place of belonging. Displaced people are people who have been forced from their homes as a result of a natural, technological or deliberate event. [3]

Dispossession

The process of transferring ownership of assets—including land and natural resources—so that the original owners, users, or beneficiaries no longer enjoy their rights. It may involve coercive, extra-legal, or questionable means.

Ethnogenesis

The emergence of Métis as a distinct ethnicity. Métis ethnogenesis acknowledges the beginnings of First Nations and European ancestors coming together, but Métis today have developed their own distinctive community with culture and traditions that are not simply ‘mixed,’ but rather, Métis.

Euro-Canadian

Describing people and groups who have ancestry and national affiliation primarily with European Nations. This is especially in reference to the settlers from European nations who have worked to colonize the land for the last two centuries.

Ewing Commission — The *Royal Commission on the Condition of the Halfbreed Population of the Province of Alberta* in 1934. Commonly known as the Ewing Commission, named after the primary commissioner, Justice Alfred Freemen Ewing, this inquiry led to the formation of the Metis Settlements.

Exovedate — (say: ex-o-ve-dāt)
A Latin term coined by Louis Riel for the Provisional Government, with the title of his leadership in the council being Exovede, meaning "out of the flock."

Expansionism — Policy of territorial or economic growth.

Fiduciary — A legal obligation of the highest degree for one party to act in the best interests of another. Typically, a fiduciary responsibility refers to financial compensation.

First Nations — Defined by the Alberta Teachers' Association as "status and non-status Indian peoples in Canada." [4]

Forgotten People — A common narrative in Métis history written from a colonial perspective that states that the Métis have been "forgotten" in history.

Framework Agreement — An agreement between two parties that recognizes that the parties have come to an agreement on some issues, but not all issues. The agreement is a commitment to move forward in addressing issues.

Freemen — Men and families that would build independent relationships with trade partners, taking up individual contracts for trade or other work with Euro-Canadian companies. They would also work as independent middlemen, trading first with Indigenous communities on their own, then later with the companies.

Freight(ing) — The action of transporting goods in bulk. Métis originally would freight by Red River Carts, York Boats, and dog sleds. Métis freighters were essential to the fur trade and established the first transportation system in what is now called Canada. [5]

Governance — To exercise continuous and direct policy-making authority over an administrative body or group of people.

Government — The system that administers, manages and delivers services to citizens in a community or given territory.

Half-Breed — A racially biased and derogatory term used, especially in the early 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, to refer to people of mixed heritage, often describing their Indigenous and European ancestries.

Halfbreed Adhesion to Treaty 3	As stated by the Métis Nation of Ontario, "A 'Halfbreed Adhesion' to Treaty 3 was entered into on September 12, 1875 and signed by Nicolas Chastelain as 'Chief' of the 'Halfbreeds of Rainy River and Lake.'" [6] The Treaty Adhesion promised the Métis lands, annuities, presents and received the same benefits as First Nations under the original treaty. [7]
Harvesting	Refers to all aspects of collecting resources from the land. Métis harvesting includes trapping, hunting, fishing, medicine gathering, berry picking and fetching of other required needs.
"Hiding in Plain Sight"	Following the Resistance efforts, the Métis were intentionally pushed to the margins of society. Because of this, resilience in this era often took the form of hiding. Some Métis, who were able, began to assimilate themselves into Euro-Canadian society, hiding their heritage from others, and even their children, to save themselves from ostracization and racism. Other Métis began to assimilate themselves into First Nations communities.
Historic Métis Community	This is in reference to the many places that Métis communities gathered, established short-term or long-term homes, practiced harvesting traditions, and more. There are many unacknowledged locations across the Homeland predating Euro-Canadian settlement.
Historic Métis Community (Ontario)	The concept from the Métis Nation of Ontario on evaluating the validity of Métis communities throughout the province. To be a Historic Métis Community in Ontario there must be evidence that the community had their own shared customs, practices, and traditions; demographic evidence that the population was identified as distinctive; and evidence that they had their own collective identity.
Historical North-West	The historic North-West is the name of the land that Métis knew as their Homeland. It refers to land north and west of Montreal, including much of what is recognized as the Métis Homeland today.
Homeland	The area known by individuals, communities, and nations as being home to their ancestors.
Hunting	A harvesting practice, this refers to the shooting of game, including, but not limited to, rabbits, grouse, moose, bison, elk, and deer.
Identity	The individual characteristics by which a thing or person is recognized or known.
Indian	The term "Indian" stems from the wrongful belief that Christopher Columbus had reached Asia in 1492. The term persisted throughout North American history as a description of Indigenous peoples in the "New World." Although the term is now considered outdated, its use in the Canadian legal system dates back to the 1876 *Constitution* and *Indian Act*.

	Today, it remains the legal term used by the Government of Canada to refer to First Nations peoples. Status 'Indians' are registered through the *Indian Act*, which continues to protect their rights and freedoms as the original inhabitants of the land. This is further enshrined in Section 35 of the 1982 *Constitution Act* (s.35(2)).
Indigeneity	A term expressing the fact of originating from a particular identity, history, culture, or region.
Indigenous	A term describing the identity, culture, or heritage of anyone whose ancestors traditionally occupied a territory that has been threatened by colonization. There are three groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada: Inuit, Métis and First Nations. Each group is unique and has its own history, languages, cultural practices, political structures, and spiritual beliefs.
Kinship	A term referencing the sense of connection, relationship, and sense of responsibility to one another between family, extended family, friends, trading partners, and community members. The term often extends to natural and spiritual worlds, human and non-human, living and not living worlds.
Laager	A barricade formation, created by arranging Red River Carts in a circle around their most vulnerable community members and possessions.
Land Surveyors	Surveying or land surveying refers to the act of determining the position of points and the distances and angles between them on the land. Land surveyors would be sent into areas to prepare for Euro-Canadian settlement during the 1800 and 1900s.
L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest	A precursor to the Métis Nation of Alberta, this was one of the first Métis governance systems established in Alberta. Métis initially began gathering under this formal name in 1928 to petition the Government of Alberta who were moving to dismiss Métis title to lands and resources that were not surrendered through scrip.
La Victoire de la Grenouillière	(say: la vick-twar de la gron-we-yayr) This battle is one of the first times the Métis gathered and fought for their rights as a Nation, June 9, 1816. Also known as the Battle of Seven Oaks and the Victory of the Frog Plain.
List of Rights	A document that outlined what Métis considered necessary for communities in the Red River area to enter into Canadian Confederation. Four successive lists of rights were drafted by the provisional government. The final version became the basis of federal legislation creating the province of Manitoba.
Litigation	The process of taking legal action.

Louis Riel	One of the Homeland Heroes of the Métis Nation, Riel was a prominent leader of the Métis through the late 19th century. He led several provisional governments in Red River, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. He also led Métis through two major resistance movements against the Government of Canada. Riel also was a founder of the province of Manitoba, and was a twice-elected Canadian Member of Parliament. He was tried in Canadian courts and hanged on November 16, 1885.
Manitoba Act	The official act that brought the province of Manitoba into Confederation on May 12, 1870.
Métis	Métis is enshrined in Section 35 of the 1982 *Constitution Act* (s.35(2)). The accepted definition of Métis as stated by the Métis National Council is: "a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation." [8]
Metis Population Betterment Act (1938)	This legislation allowed for 12 tracts of land, to be identified through a series of Government Orders-In-Council.
Métis River Lots	A way of dividing and distributing land into long, narrow parcels used in many early settlements across the Métis Homeland, such as St. Albert, Edmonton, Prince Albert, and Red River. As the name suggests, these lots were positioned along waterways, and their long, narrow shape helped ensure that every home had access to the water (which was important for drinking, cleaning, fishing and transportation), forested areas (for building materials and fuel), and space to farm. It was an adaptation of the French seigneurial (say: seyg-noor-ee-al) system.
Metis Settlements	Eight areas of land set aside as protected lands for Métis to live and govern themselves on. Known today as Metis Settlements, which were formerly commonly called Metis Colonies by Métis and others.
Michif	Michif is the distinct, Indigenous language of the Métis. In Alberta, this language draws, in varying degrees by dialect, from the French and Cree languages spoken by ancestors of Métis. It was first developed orally and was later made into a written language.
Mobility	The movement of Métis across the Homeland is at the heart of the Métis experience.
Nation-to-Nation	A relationship in which both parties act and communicate with respect for the authority and dignity of each other's governance.
Nationhood	National identity or independence.

Networking	The process of interacting with others to build economic, professional, or social relationships.
Non-Status Indian	As defined by the Government of Canada, this term "commonly refers to people who identify themselves as Indians but who are not entitled to registration on the Indian Register pursuant to the Indian Act. Some may however be members of a First Nation band." [9]
North-West Half-Breed Commission	A Commission established by the Government of Canada to address claims of Aboriginal title to land that Métis had in the historic North-West, leading to the deliverance of scrip for individual Métis. This was distributed so Métis could exchange it for land or cash.
Orangemen	A “headstrong" political and religious society with a home base in Ireland. [10] The Orange Order in Canada was passionately anti-Catholic, anti-Métis, and pro-expansionism.
Ostracization	To exclude someone from a group or society at large.
Pemmican	Traditionally made of dried meat, usually buffalo or moose meat, and pounded into coarse powder and mixed with an equal amount of fat, and seasonal berries, such as saskatoon berries, cranberries, cherries, or currants.
Perspective	A person’s unique way of understanding and responding to the world based on his or her experience, community, beliefs, values, stories, languages, laws, ethics, and behaviours.
Promulgate	To promote or make widely known.
Propagate	To spread or promote ideas, theories, and more to a wide audience.
Provisional Government	A provisional government is formed when an urgent need for political decision-making is required and dissolved when this issue has been resolved.
Race-shifting	A concept referring to the growing number of people that self-identify as Indigenous. Some claim that they are Métis without any connection to the Métis Nation nor the Métis Homeland because they believe that Métis means mixed race. Race-shifting dismisses the Métis Nation's collective history, as well as the many generations that hid their Métis identity to protect their families from racism and discrimination.
Red River	The area of Red River includes the southern part of what is today Manitoba, the northwestern corner of Minnesota, USA, and a large chunk of North Dakota, USA. The Assiniboine River and the Red River are two major rivers flowing through the region. The Red River was called “the Lower Red” and the Assiniboine River “the Upper Red.” [11]

Red River Cart	A wagon-style mode of transport traditionally made with only materials found on the plains. A typical Red River cart was a box made of wooden railings attached to two large wheels and two shafts to attach it to an animal. Métis in the Red River area invented this during the fur trade.
Red River Expeditionary Force	A Canadian military force sent to Manitoba after the province joined Confederation. They effectively drove Métis off their lands with threats and violence.
Residential Schools and Day Schools	These are a variety of schools established between the 1880s until 1996 to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian communities and culture. These schools were funded by Euro-Canadian government and run by Catholic and Anglican churches. Assimilating Indigenous children would enable the Dominion of Canada to retain better control of communities and land.
Resilience	The capacity to survive and recover quickly from challenges.
Revolutionary Bill of Rights	Similar to the 1869-70 “List of Rights,” the Revolutionary Bill of Rights was a document intended to get the Government of Canada to recognize the rights of Métis to their possessions and lands. The document was adopted in Saskatchewan on March 8, 1885.
Road Allowance	A plot of crown land set aside for future development of roads.
Road Allowance People, or Communities	The Métis that squatted on road allowance plots of land came to be known as the "road allowance people." The Métis living on road allowance lands were marginalized by racist Euro-Canadian societies, creating a variety of challenges for Métis families, such as barriers to health care, employment and education.
Rupert's Land	In 1670, despite the presence of many Indigenous Nations, the English granted the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) much of North America. Prince Rupert of Rhine became the first appointed Governor of the HBC’s new territory, and so the North-West was also known as Rupert’s Land. The name Rupert's Land became important to Métis as their trade partners, the HBC would call the region Rupert's Land.
Sash	The Métis sash is one of the most recognizable symbols of Métis culture and identity. The sash is a hand-woven wool belt that is made in various lengths. Its fringed ends are both decorative and functional. The sash comes in many different colours. Some people have assigned meanings to the colours and patterns of the sash. The sash was worn as an accessory and tool with a variety of uses—for example, as a belt, rope, sling, scarf, washcloth, etc.

Scrip	A document that was used as evidence of entitlement to something. Scrip was distributed by the Canadian government to Métis people so they could use it to exchange for land or cash.
Self-determination	The right of a people to decide their own destiny, their own education, political status, economic habit, cultural and social traditions.
Self-governance	To exercise continuous authority for one's self or community; to direct the making and administration of policy for the people, as opposed to having external administration and policies exerting control.
Self-government	A system that organizes people and ways of living that is controlled and directed by the inhabitants of a political unit rather than by an outside authority (the control of one's own affairs). [12]
Settler	A person who moves to a new place with the intention to stay there. Most settlers impacting Métis communities through history are Euro-Canadians.
Sixties Scoop	From 1951 through to the 1980s, the Government of Canada, with the support of churches in Canada, targeted Indigenous children and removed them from their families to be placed in middle-class Euro-Canadian homes that were far away from their birth families. This system is known as the "Sixties Scoop." While some children grew up in safe, loving adopted homes, many experienced all forms of abuse and were used for labour by their adopted families. Almost all children scooped from their families never experienced an opportunity to learn about their Indigenous heritage, culture, and traditions.
Storytelling	An educational practice that involves the sharing of a collection of historical accounts. A way to instill knowledge of the mind, body, and soul in connection to the earth through experienced and trusted "knowledge keepers."
Squatting / Squatters	After being unfairly displaced, Métis families would make their homes on unoccupied land claimed by the Euro-Canadian government as Crown land. These families would build communities in these areas, being labelled as "squatters." Métis who lived on these unoccupied lands were recognized by Euro-Canadians as squatting because they occupied lands without recognized legal entitlement, and without meeting the land and building requirements set by Euro-Canadian government.
Sovereignty	The authority of a nation to govern itself.
Tradition	Long-standing customs that are an expression of values and identity.
Trapline	The route in which traps would be set. An individual trapper has their own trapline that no one else can trap on.

Trapping This type of harvesting involves the setting of traps for fur-bearing animals. Trapping is primarily used for harvesting animal furs. Some people also eat the meat of the trapped animals.

Treason The crime of using force or violence for the purpose of overthrowing the government. In some instances, this includes disclosing, without lawful authority, information that may be used to impair the safety of the people. [13]

Values The principles of particular standards of behavior or ways of living.

Voyageur A person hired by the fur trade companies of the 18th and 19th centuries to transport goods and passengers to and from trading posts by boats.

York Boat A large, shallow-water boat. It was invented by William Sinclair, a Métis man who was the chief tradesman with a crew of Métis men at York Factory, a Hudson's Bay Company headquarters in northern Manitoba. York boats can be rowed or sailed.

Introduction

The **Homeland** history of the **Métis** is a legacy of resilient **self-determined** families. When Métis tell their history, their stories are a celebration of resilient communities, revered leaders, and strong **values** within beautiful, vibrant cultural **traditions** that remain foundational to the Métis Nation today.

Métis across the Homeland begin their history with a reflection of their **ethnogenesis** [a] as a people, remembering their families' developing distinct **identity** as Métis, with honour for their ancestral relations to **First Nations** and **Euro-Canadians**. The early history is remembered in their distinct language, **culture**, traditions, and communities, which unified the Nation throughout their Homeland, especially as they collectively contributed to the global fur trade. In the face of the colonial efforts of Euro-Canadians, Métis history remembers the valiant efforts of their families and leaders in defending their lands and rights. Métis resistance against oppression never ended, as families lived out **resilience** in a new way amidst continual dismissal, **dispossession**, and **displacement** by Euro-Canadian **settler** families and their **governments** throughout the Métis Homeland.

There are many accounts of the Métis Nation's Homeland history published by Métis. This resource has no intention of replacing the incredibly detailed accounts of the vibrant history Métis scholars and communities know and share today. Rather, it gratefully draws on these stories. One important resource that must be acknowledged is *The North-West is Our Mother,* written by Métis historian and lawyer Jean Teillet. [14] Her critically detailed telling of Métis history informs much of the stories shared in this document.

This resource is designed to support educators in developing their foundational knowledge about the Métis Nation's Homeland history. By engaging with this resource, educators will be equipped with an understanding about the sense of belonging Métis have to their Homeland, the North-West. They will also be able to explain the impacts of colonial displacement and dispossession that Métis have experienced for over 200 years.

What is the Métis Homeland?

Why is it important to Métis?

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[a] "Ethnogenesis" refers to the formation or development of an ethnic group.

Métis History, as Métis Tell It

Métis history has been "'painted over' by mainstream interpretations of official history" in most Euro-Canadian educational resources.[15] To understand the essence and history of Métis communities, educators are encouraged to listen to Métis stories that are read and told by Métis people themselves.

> Métis issues have been obscured in Canadian accounts and history, likely due to the fact that they never explicitly chose to communicate with the Métis but focused on the Indians. Indian agents were established to explicitly maintain a relationship (albeit paternalistic) with First Nations. They weren't assigned to address the Métis Nation as formal participants in law making—making them seem passive in the creation of society.

–Patricia A. McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History, 1788–1920s* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 203.

Métis are a distinct, collective, **Indigenous** Nation, with a defined history, worldview, culture, language, and **governance** structure. Métis are a resilient, bold, and hardworking people whose passion for independence as **freemen** has contributed to the economy that has allowed Canada to exist throughout history.

Today, Métis voices and **perspectives** are being heard more often in educational resources, **community** settings, academic writing, and other spheres. Many Alberta institutions, including Alberta Education, acknowledge their responsibility to listen and respond to the stories Indigenous peoples share about themselves in responding to commitments such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.[16] As educators explore the stories in this foundational knowledge resource, they are invited to reflect on their learning of the history of this land and of Métis people. Engaging in this resource is an invitation to educators to begin sharing about Métis history from a Métis perspective. The quotation shown below from former President Gary Lipinski of the Métis Nation of Ontario outlines the importance of building a lasting relationship through both recognition and reconciliation:

> The lack of relationship and recognition of the Métis by Canada that has existed historically is something that still permeates today, as you see reflected in an ongoing lack of federal policy regarding the Métis which has a huge negative impact on our citizens and communities. This is indeed an ongoing shame that needs to be addressed and rectified.

–President of the Métis Nation of Ontario Gary Lipinski, "Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and the Métis Experience: MNO supports all 94 Calls to Action," December 17, 2015, http://www.metisnation.org/news-media/news/truth-and-reconciliation-commission-report-and-the-metis-experience/.

Who is Telling the Story?

Educators are required to teach about Métis history accurately and authentically. Many history books used in classrooms contain misinformation that defines Métis as "the people of mixed blood, who were only part of the fur trade, that once rebelled against the Government of Canada." This misinformed narrative continues to cause damage in the relationship Métis have with Canada.

This resource encourages meaningful reflection about who is telling the story. The resource offers a selection of critical discussions highlighting conflicts between many common narratives about Métis in Canadian history and the Métis accounts of their own history.

Figure 2. Métis Group at Green Lake, Saskatchewan. ca. 1900. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives: NA-2644.

Who is Telling the Story?	Page #
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Métis Homeland Heroes

For most Canadians, their knowledge about Métis is limited to a basic understanding of **Louis Riel.** The monumental achievements and selfless sacrifices that Louis Riel made for the Métis are just a few among the many memorialized successes that Métis remember in their history.

The seven stories listed below were chosen as they will help educators develop a strong foundational understanding of the Métis Nation's Homeland history. However, these Métis Homeland Heroes are only a few of many men and women who are cherished by Métis in their history. Educators are encouraged to learn more about the heroes whom Métis in their communities remember and celebrate, as each community has had leaders who have advocated for them in order to foster a secure, healthy, and successful future throughout the generations.

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Pierre Falcon	20
Cuthbert Grant	21
Gabriel Dumont	26
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Jim Sinclair	61
James Brady	65
Harry Daniels	80

Most education about Métis in Canada shares the narrative of Louis Riel as a leader during the Métis resistance efforts against Canada, which Canadians have interpreted as “rebellions” for generations. Today, educators acknowledge that they are responsible for providing students with a positive narrative, celebrating the many heroes whom Métis honour across the Homeland and locally.

Métis Ethnogenesis

Through the process called "ethnogenesis," the generations of children of First Nations people and Euro-Canadian people developed a distinct culture, language, and way of being. By the late 1700s, these families established Métis communities, with their own values, culture, traditions, languages, governance, and worldviews. By the early 1800s, these communities formed their distinct **nationhood,** becoming the Métis Nation, an Indigenous people who knew the land and governed themselves.

Who is Telling the Story? Mixed Blood or Nation

One of the most commonplace misunderstandings about Métis identity is the idea that Métis are simply a people with "mixed-blood," or mixed heritage. This confusing narrative suggests that someone is Métis if they have a First Nations parent and a non-Indigenous parent.

Métis are not a historical process; they are their own people, with a distinct history, culture, language, and Nation.

As is explored throughout the five foundational knowledge themes, the Métis Nation is a collective of communities who share a common ethnogenesis and history. They have common traditions, family stories, and cultural celebrations. Métis share languages, and many speak a distinct Indigenous language called "**Michif.**"

Responding to questions about Métis identity, Métis scholar Dr. Adam Gaudry makes three important points:

- "That Métis are not defined by our mixedness, but by our collective history;
- That Métis already understand our origins are in the West, and that we do not need other explanations of where we come from;
- That Métis already have an agreed-upon definition of who we are, and that others should be respectful of this definition."

–Adam Gaudry, "Métis Are a People, Not a Historical Process," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/metis-are-a-people-not-a-historical-process.

These foundational knowledge themes equip educators with a basic understanding about the Métis Nation's distinct history, identity, culture, and language, with stories rooted in the North-West. It is important that educators learn and respect the way Métis share about their identity. These resources will support educators in teaching about Métis identity, communities, and history based on the voices of Métis themselves, rather than non-Métis perspectives.

> We [Métis] tell stories of the Battle of Seven Oaks, our conflicts with the Hudson' s Bay Company, the Sayer Trial, the resistances at Red River and on the South Saskatchewan. Our history is that of buffalo hunts, of military victories and the suffering after our many dispersals. We have stories of great 19th century leaders: Cuthbert Grant, Baptiste Wilkie, Gabriel Dumont and, of course, Louis Riel. In the 20th century, Métis political leadership built new organizations to represent Métis interests in Western Canada—leading to the formation of the Métis National Council in 1983.

–Gaudry, "Métis Are a People, Not a Historical Process." Bolding added.

Métis Homeland

The Métis Nation have known a certain region as their Homeland for generations. This area spans across present-day Western Canada and northern sections of the United States, including what is today Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, parts of the Northwest Territories, parts of western Ontario, parts of north-eastern British Columbia, parts of northern Montana, parts of North Dakota, and parts of Minnesota. [17]

> We were born as a people and developed as a Nation along the fur trade routes that wove the three prairie provinces—Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta—together with parts of Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and the Northern United States. This is the Métis Nation Homeland.

–Métis Nation of Alberta, "History of Métis Self-Government," http://www.albertametisgov.com/background/.

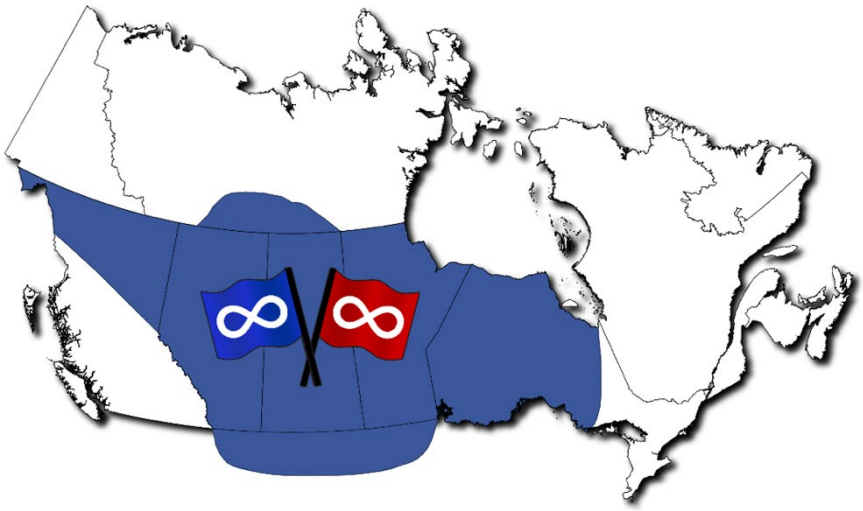


Figure 3. Métis Nation Homeland in Canada. Photo courtesy of the Métis Nation of Alberta, 2021.

> The North-West is the birthplace and motherland of the Métis Nation.

–Jean Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother*: *The Story of Louis Riel's People, the Métis Nation* (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., Patrick Crean Editions, 2019), xv.

The Métis Homeland is most well-known in many Métis histories as the "North-West." The North-West was the land north and west of Montreal, where Métis trading partners had built their main trade centres. [18]

Another name for many of the areas encompassed in the Métis Homeland is "**Rupert's Land**." In 1670, despite the presence of many Indigenous Nations, the English granted much of the lands of North America to the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). Prince Rupert of Rhine became the first appointed Governor of the HBC's new territory, and so the North-West was also known as "Rupert's Land." This name became important to Métis because their trading partners, the HBC, would use it as the name of the region.

Figure 4. This artistic rendering illustrates the boundaries of Rupert's Land, the majority of which overlaps the Métis Homeland. Photo courtesy of Rupertsland Institute.

Early Métis History

Early Métis history is a celebration of the identity of Métis, not only as a fur trading partner but as a collective of communities that developed their own distinct language, culture, nationhood, and traditions. Métis' foundational values fostered their contributions to the fur trade, which enabled them to establish a series of key relationships during the trading era.

Developing Foundational Values

Métis values are foundational to the Métis Nation that thrives today. These four values empowered the leadership the Métis community assumed in the global economy of the time.

- Community, Networking, & Kinship
- Traditional Stories
- Mobility & Adaptability
- Resilience

> This era contains the establishment of the great buffalo hunts, the development of the Red River Settlement as a Métis cultural [centre], the collapse of the HBC trade monopoly, the negotiation of the Manitoba Act to create a confederal relationship with Canada, and the start of the exodus of Métis people from Manitoba due to immediate treaty violations and settler colonialism.

–In saying "treaty violations," Gaudry is referencing the agreements Métis made with Canada that were outlined in the *Manitoba Act* of 1870. Métis were not otherwise consulted on treaties. Adam Gaudry, "*Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk*—'We Are Those Who Own Ourselves'*:* A Political History of Métis Self-Determination in the North-West, 1830–1870" (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 2014), 14.

Community, Networking, & Kinship

Métis **kinship** defined family not only as those who were related but those who lived in shared relationships with Métis through ceremony or a continuing partnership in trade. [19] In addition to caring for their families and communities, Métis worked to care for their trading partners, ensuring that everyone had food, tools, and shelter. It was within their families that Métis culture and traditions were lived out and celebrated. The sharing of traditions such as jigging, **sash** weaving, fiddle playing, **storytelling,** doing beadwork and other forms of artistry, and partaking in faith-based ceremonies brought families together seasonally.

> The Métis worldview "privileged family above all else and directed actions and behaviors in a manner that reflected the values, taboos, virtues, and ideals of this society, which, in turn, were the laws by which people lived. Family or wahkoohtowin . . . reflected a shared cultural identity."

–Wahkoohtowin (say: wah-koh-toh-win) is a Cree and Michif term referring to being related and living in ways of caring for relations. Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 6.

Traditional Stories

The stories that Métis families share weave their communities together. Examples of narratives that Métis recount include collective memories of the Nation's history, recounting family lines through history, stories of faith traditions and/or religious teachings, and teaching about the land. Entertaining stories that celebrate exploits, tragedies, and famous deeds are also examples of stories that families have preserved in their times of gathering for generations. [20] A few of these stories are shared in these resources, and many more are found only within the families. These historical accounts, many of which live on today, remind Métis about their ancestral Indigenous identity as a distinct Nation.

Mobility and Adaptability

The value of **mobility** that Métis have held for generations has always been found within the networks of family that stretch across the Homeland. [21] The Métis Homeland is a series of storied places where Métis have lived and worked together for generations. [22] Whether planning for the hunt; celebrating faith, traditions, and culture; or taking on political resilience, Métis families valued mobility and **adaptability** as they navigated through their Homeland.

Figure 5. Métis Family Hunting Camp ca. 1890–1910. Library and Archives Canada: R190-158-5-E, Box: 1929, Copy negative: C-001644.

> It must be "remembered that these were families on the move. Though identifiable with particular regions, they did not establish settlements, as we understand them. While the buffalo hunters occupied habitation sites—wintering camps or *hivernements* in the historical records—they lived as much in-between them as in them. Where, how, and when the brigades moved was central to their economic behaviour, but it was also pivotal to their efforts at maintaining social cohesion."

–Hivernements (say: he-vayr-nuh-mont). Brenda Macdougall and Nicole St-Onge, "Rooted in Mobility: Métis Hunting Brigades," *Manitoba History* 71 (Winter 2013), 26.

Resilience

The history of Métis in their Homeland is more complex than families joyfully celebrating their Nationhood. Métis history is a story telling of families asserting their rights as an Indigenous Nation, resisting the attempts of Canada to claim Métis Homeland as their own, and enduring the impacts of racialized policies that divided their communities.

Early Métis History: Fur Trade

The strength of Métis contributions to the global fur trade of the 1700s and 1800s was fostered through the values and traditions of Métis throughout the North-West. For Métis, the fur trade was the collective experience for generations of **harvesting** furs; navigating tensions; **networking** trade relationships; and resisting the imposition of control by Euro-Canadian governments, traders, and settlers. These experiences collectively invigorated Métis communities and led them to embrace the expressions of nationhood that have been necessary to resist colonial imposition.

Métis Harvesting Traditions

Traditional harvesting practices, including fishing, gathering, **hunting** and **trapping**, allowed Métis to feed their families. These practices also empowered Métis to supply key resources for the global economy during the late 1700s through to the late 1800s. Métis knew the ways in which the land and water would provide for their needs as they gathered resources for food and medicine. Communities knew who was able to help them collect certain plants for medicine and who could tell them where the best patches of berries were growing.

Trapping enabled Métis to become invaluable as suppliers of small furs in the trade industry. Families would travel along their **traplines** on an annual cycle. The most in-demand furs were beaver, bear, fisher, fox, squirrel, rabbit, wolf, muskrat, mink, marten, otter, wolverine, skunk, and lynx. [23] Fashion trends, market trends, and the rarity of certain furs would influence the prices given to them when trading the pelts at a trading post. [24]

Hunting large game such as elk, moose, deer, antelope, and buffalo was important to early Métis generations. These animals were a primary source of food and provided materials for clothing. Jackets and footwear, for example, were made of hide. Individual families and communities hunted most of the large game year-round. The buffalo hunt, however, was of primary importance to Métis economic survival and governance. [25]

> Métis woman Adeline Sparvier once described the hunting activities of her ancestors, particularly buffalo hunting, in an interview with Nathan Bearl:
> Adeline: "Oh long ago my old father-in-law there, Joseph William Bacon, he used to go out hunting for moose. I don't know where, well I was small that time . . . . He used to disappear for six months. (laughs) Lots of them, you know, not only my in-laws, but other ones too, Pelletiers and all. . . ."
> Nathan: "They were getting buffalo meat and all kinds of wild meat. . . ."
> "Adeline: "Buffalo meat and all kinds of wild meat…""
>
> –Adeline Sparvier, Interviewed by Nathan Bearl. Transcript. August 9, 1983. Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, Gabriel Dumont Institute.

Figure 6. Furs at Métis Crossing. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

The Buffalo Hunt

By the 1830s, many Métis had been gathering and organizing a collective governance of their families for the annual buffalo hunt. The buffalo hunt was a defining event for Métis communities across the Homeland, influencing all families, whether they participated or not. [26]

Figure 7. Métis buffalo hunting camp, Boundary Commission (1872-74), Archives of Manitoba: 165, N11932.

Annually across the Homeland, the beginning of the hunt was announced in as many public spheres as possible, such as churches and community gathering places, inviting everyone to join the buffalo-hunting caravan. [27] Typically, families would meet starting in June and, over the course of the warmer seasons, complete several big hunts. The heads of families would meet up at pre-determined times to elect the **Chief Captain of the Hunt**, who then chose ten people to be **dizaines** (say: dee-zayns; ten captains), who would form the Council of the Hunt. These dizaines would also choose ten scouts and camp guards. The Council of the Hunt advised the Chief Captain of the Hunt with comments drawn from the whole community of families. They also would select, oversee, and support the hunters, scouts, and guards in position for the duration of the hunt. The council was non-coercive and limited in its authority. Decisions made were subject to the people in the community.

> Regardless of how institutionalized the hunts were, Métis constituted each hunt with an assembly of families.
>
> –Gaudry, *"Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk,"* 96.

> Carts were seen to emerge from every nook and corner of the settlement bound for the plains . . . . From Fort Garry, the cavalcade and camp-followers went crowding on to the public road, and thence, stretching from point to point, till the third day in the evening, when they reached Pembina, the great rendezvous on such occasions . . . . Here the roll was called and general muster taken, when they numbered on this occasion, 1,630 souls; and here the rules and regulations for the journey were finally settled. The officials for the trip were named and installed into office; and all without the aid of writing materials.

–Alexander Ross, a Euro-Canadian trader and author, recorded his experience witnessing the buffalo hunt in 1856. Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and its General History to the Present Day* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1972 reprint), 245–246; cited in Macdougall and St. Onge, "Rooted in Mobility," http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/71/metisbrigades.shtml.

Figure 8. Buffalo at Buffalo National Park near Wainwright, Alberta (closed 1940), ca. 1916. Glenbow Archives: PD-444-2-58.

It was a major undertaking to organize 2,000 to 3,000 people annually, with all their living provisions, such as **voyageur** tents, food, and clothing, all stored in the **Red River Carts.** Consensus was a consistent requirement in camp affairs. The selection of captains, the Chief Captain of the Hunt**,** the guides, and camp criers was the result of decisions made communally among the relations in the community. If any issues arose, the entire community would gather and make a collective decision.

Métis would travel together with scouts sent on ahead in search of the best hunting grounds for buffalo. Once the ideal location was chosen, strategies were agreed upon about how to collectively run the animals. Buffalo have a great sense of smell and hearing but poor eyesight, so they were generally approached from upwind. [28] Once close enough to the herd, the Chief Captain of the Hunt gave the signal for a coordinated run. It was considered a great success to harvest many buffalo in one hunt.

When it was safe, the women led anyone who was not a hunter out onto the killing fields to prepare the hunted animals for harvest, transport, and long-term storage as dried or smoked meat. Once this vital phase had been accomplished, the carts would be full and the members of the hunting party would return to their homes to await the arrival of the trading season.

Métis Women of the Fur Trade

The knowledge, skills, and passion of Métis women must be recognized and acknowledged, as they provided for the needs of their communities and were key to the development of the Métis Nation.

> Norbert Welsh remembers buffalo hunting with his wife Cecilia Boyer, sharing about the leadership she had in their traditions: "In all my years of buffalo hunting, I never destroyed buffalo for their pelts alone. I always took the whole carcass, except the head, home. My wife had once said that since we were going to make a living hunting buffalo, she did not want me to kill more than we could dry and pack. She told me that if I brought in an extra hide without the carcass, she would not dress it. One day my brother-in-law and I were travelling on the prairie, and we sighted a little herd of buffalo. I let fly and killed a cow. We skinned it, and took a little of the fattest part of the animal. When we reached our tent, I threw the hide and saddle down. My wife smiled, and lightly kicked the hide away. She meant what she said. I gave the hide to my mother-in-law."

–Métis Buffalo Hunter Norbert Welsh, in Norbert Welsh, Mary Weekes, and W. A. Waiser, *The Last Buffalo Hunter* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1994), 82–83.

Figure 9. Two Métis women pictured in a colorized photo, from *Dibaajimowin: The Art of Storytelling*, https://www.dibaajimowin.com/uploads/1/1/6/4/116462303/colorized-image-2_orig.jpg.

Figure 10. Métis women at camp, 1907. Photo courtesy of the Glenbow Archives: NA-726-21.

Women's essential contributions are often overshadowed by the stories of the men. Stories of Métis history cannot be fully known without seeing and hearing about the contributions of Métis women.[29]

Figure 11. Métis camp and women baking, Pembina area, Manitoba, 1859. Glenbow Archives: NA-1406-27.

In addition to their crucial role in the buffalo hunt, Métis women produced provisions and materials that served their communities, their Nation, and the global trade economy. Their distinct art style contributed to the global trade. Métis women's artwork is often held in museum collections around the world, acknowledged simply as "Native Art" with no names or connection to their Métis heritage.

> Some of these women were godmothers to 30 or 40 children . . . . This was unusual in the context of godparenting in the Catholic church, but it seems to have been characteristic of Métis life. It was a way of extending the family as it is in the Indigenous world.

–Brenda Macdougall, "Mapping Métis Fur Trade Era Connections," June 1, 2016, https://ontariosuniversities.ca/11540-2.

Figure 12. Leah Marie Dorion, "Michif Women's Lodge," 2009, acrylic on canvas.

> Leah Dorion's exhibit *Country Wives* illustrates the "intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge of the land and resources" and "Metis women's work duties such as chopping wood, picking berries, unloading canoes, travelling with Red River carts, riding and working with horses/dogs."

–Leah Dorion, interviewed by Brenda Hrycuik, "Friends of Batoche," spring 2012, https://www.leahdorion.ca/pdf/INTERVIEW%20WITH%20LEAH%20MARI

Other Fur Trade Achievements

In addition to being one of the primary contributors of furs, Métis were known for providing a variety of essential services to the infrastructure of the global fur trade economy.

Some of the many contributions that Métis had in the economy include:

- labour work
- freighting goods
- carpentry
- farming & ranching
- dog-sledding
- land navigators
- building Red River Carts, canoes and York Boats
- selling provisions and goods
- employment at trading posts
- translators
- horsemen
- guides
- contractors

Leadership in Transportation

Métis were known for their leadership in traversing both waterways and roadways. They were entrusted as guides, scow men, **freighters**, and carpenters for their creative solutions in innovating the fur trade.

Many of the complex transportation networks that Canadians enjoy today were established by the Métis as they travelled across the land in their Red River Carts. The creation of the versatile Red River Cart made Métis families irreplaceable as freighters in the global fur trade.

Figure 13. Red River Cart in Northern Alberta, 1882. Photo Courtesy of the Glenbow Museum: NA-239-90.

The Carlton Trail is one of the most prominent Red River Cart trails. It connected Métis families to their trading posts across the Homeland between Fort Garry (which is near historical Red River and current day Winnipeg) to Fort Edmonton. [30] This trail is a part of the Trans-Canada Highway 16, known today as the "Yellowhead Highway."

> The Yellowhead Pass and Tête Jaune Cache (say: Tee-John Cash) were named after an Iroquois-Métis trapper, Pierre Bostonais. The French Voyageurs called him "Tête Jaune" ("yellowhead"), because of his blonde streaked hair.

–Trans Canada Yellowhead Highway Association, "History of the Yellowhead Highway," http://www.transcanadayellowhead.com/files/pdf/SagaBrief.pdf.

In addition to their land travel, Métis families would guide Euro-Canadians of many occupations through the land on waterways. They would also freight furs and trade goods on several types of boats: **York Boats**, canoes, kayaks, and scows. Métis were entrusted with the important trade goods of the trading companies in the roughest of waters.

Figure 14. Métis Guides with the Geological Survey of Canada, 1886. Library and Archives Canada, "Hiding in Plain Sight Virtual Exhibition," 4820355.

Pemmican Production: The Food that Fuelled the Fur Trade

Pemmican was traditionally made of dried meat, usually buffalo and moose meat, and pounded into coarse powder and mixed with an equal amount of fat and seasonal berries, such as saskatoon berries, cranberries, cherries or currants. Pemmican allowed the Métis to continue their independent, mobile lifestyle. [31]

Figure 15. Drying Buffalo Meat for Pemmican. 1923. Photo Courtesy of the Glenbow Archives: NA-7-151.

Benefits of Pemmican

1. Locally produced: Avoiding the high costs of importing food across the Homeland or overseas
2. Highly nutritious: Even in small amounts, pemmican is high in protein and has an abundance of nutrients
3. Long-Term storage: It would keep for years without going bad and as a result was stored along river routes and at trading posts.
4. Easy to Store and Transport: It was easily stored without taking up much space in canoes, York Boats and Red River Carts
5. No fire needed to prepare it for eating

Métis Trading Relationships

Métis have, for generations, been people who own, govern, and care for themselves. In trade, this was expressed in the form of individuals working as freemen, and their families were, by necessity, "masters of their own affairs." [32] Often, the freemen would build independent relationships with trade partners, taking up individual contracts for trade or other work with Euro-Canadian companies. They would also work as independent middlemen, trading with Indigenous communities on their own and later with the companies. [33]

> Once a relationship was acknowledged, the Métis would see it as an obligation to provide support when called on. Conversely, the Métis would expect a trading partner especially one with whom they had long traded, to provide support in the form of food, tools, or shelter at need.

–Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother*, 91.

Figure 16. Pelts such as above were a key part of the fur trade that fostered the Métis' relationships. Photo courtesy of the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Trade Relationships with First Nations

Métis had developed familial relationships and community connections with Cree, Saulteaux (say: saul-toh), Assiniboine (say: ah-sin-ah-boyn), and other First Nations throughout the Homeland. [34] They would sometimes live together in intercultural communities to partner in hunting and trading. Their families would also join in marriage and other traditions. [35] Their alliances had both economic and political benefits for the communities, as they often stood together against colonial movements throughout their histories. The complex diplomatic system in which Métis functioned did not draw them away from their relationships with First Nations; rather, it strengthened all the communities they partnered with. The paragraph below speaks to the diplomatic processes that Métis lived, sharing a few of Gabriel Dumont's memories as examples.

> Dumont recalls a time that he returned from hunting to find that an unnamed Cree warrior had taken his best horse. Dumont was deeply offended by "theft" of his horse, which the Cree warrior probably interpreted as a "gift-giving" obligation owed to relations. . . . The Cree again impressed on Dumont that the gift of his best horse was a part of the Métis gift-exchange responsibility of their treaty relationship, stating that it was "their law" that "their friends, allies, and they themselves were obliged to give their best horses when they had to fight an enemy." Dumont never objected to this responsibility, but instead, using the shared language of kinship obligations and ally responsibilities, he was able to convince the Cree that he should fulfill his kinship obligations in a different manner."

–Gabriel Dumont, *Memoirs: The Memoirs as Dictated by Gabriel Dumont* (Saint-Boniface: Les Editions du Blé, 2006), 36; Gaudry, "*Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk*," 149.

Developing a peaceful relationship with First Nations, especially those who were strangers to the Métis, took time and sometimes brought loss. During the mid-1800s, Métis and Dakota-Sioux (say: Dakota-Soo) groups had a series of escalating conflicts. The tensions were not resolved until both groups had felt the weight of war in the Battle of Grand Coteau (say: coh-toh) in 1851. Métis leader **Cuthbert Grant** played a key role in negotiating the peace treaties with the Dakota-Sioux, allowing trade and hunting relationships to continue. [36]

Trade Relationships with Euro-Canadians

Métis economic and political relationships centred on their values of community, networking, and kinship. However, many of the newcomers of European origin did not view Métis as kin and often treated them accordingly. The relationships that Métis had with Euro-Canadians were complex, as they connected primarily as family, economic partners, or political allies. The economic relationships Métis had with the Hudson's Bay Company and the North-West Company are critical elements of the Métis Nation's Homeland history.

Hudson's Bay Company

The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was formally created by the English on May 2, 1670. The HBC was granted a monopoly over all the trade economy of the area of land with waterways that are connected to Hudson's Bay. [37]

Figure 17. Hudson's Bay Company Store, Green Lake, Saskatchewan. 1939. Photo courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, R-A22102.

> The Métis people had a longstanding relationship with the Hudson' s Bay Company in the nineteenth-century, and were thus able to count on the Company to behave as a good relative for much of this time, (or at least be a predictable, if often imperfect, relative). However, the Company often extended its reach, attempting to trade in its role as relative for the role of governor. In these cases, Métis tended to treat the Company as a stranger.

–Gaudry, "*Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk*," 165

In the beginning, they focused on establishing a small chain of forts along the shores of Hudson Bay, where they waited for trappers to arrive each spring with their furs. The HBC relied on the skills of the Métis as excellent hunters and traders for furs and other goods. Their voyageur and interpretive skills were essential in supporting Euro-Canadian trading relationships with other Indigenous communities. In time, the HBC leaders relied on the skills and relationships of the Métis to establish their posts and stores wherever they saw Indigenous community gathering places.

North-West Company

The North-West Company (NWC) was formally established by Euro-Canadian settlers on April 24, 1779. The entry of the NWC into the fur trade economy broke the trade monopoly of the HBC. [38] The NWC's wintering traders were called "Nor' Westers." Unlike the HBC, the Nor' Westers would travel into the northern interior of the Métis Homeland to trade with the Métis and other Indigenous peoples in their own communities. One of the most important trade items the Métis offered to the NWC was pemmican. Having the Nor' Westers come to the Métis communities in their own regions strengthened their sense of kinship in their trading relationship. [39] The kinship and alliance between the Métis and the Nor' Westers was strengthened when Euro-Canadian settlers and the HBC attempted to take control of the community and trade in the **Red River Settlement** during the early 1800s.

Emergence of Métis Nationhood

Métis nationhood emerged as Métis governed nationwide phenomena like the buffalo hunt brigades, cultural gatherings, and a series of socially responsible economic relationships amongst themselves and their trade partners. In the face of the colonial intentions of Euro-Canadian settlers, the Métis Nation, unified and strong, resisted with emerging expressions of nationhood. They collectively stood by a flag, protecting the homes of their families in Red River, and defending their trading rights for generations.

The Red River Settlement

By the early 1800s, the first generation of the Métis Nation had been established, and they continued to grow and expand. Métis families in Red River were already forming their kinship networks across the Homeland, linking to Métis in the land that would later become Alberta.

The emergence of Métis nationhood has its most prominent roots in the Métis community of "Red River, which despite its name, is not just a river." [40] The Red River area includes the southern part of what is today Manitoba, the north-western corner of Minnesota, and a large chunk of North Dakota. The Assiniboine River and the Red River are two major rivers flowing through the region. The Red River was called "the Lower Red" and the Assiniboine River "the Upper Red." [41] When Métis reflect on their home in Red River, they refer to the lands connected by the Lower Red to the headwaters of the Mississippi River and the Upper Red that runs through Saskatchewan, all connected in the present-day area of Winnipeg. [42]

Figure 18. Winnipeg on this map is in the general area of the Red River Settlement. The highlighted river streaming through Winnipeg is the Red River. This is an up-close glimpse of how Métis were connected across their Homeland. Photo courtesy of Karl Musser, Red River of the North Map, February 15, 2007. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 2.5 Generic License, http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/.

In 1811, the HBC sold 74 million acres of what they thought was their land to the majority shareholder, Thomas Douglas, the 5th Lord Selkirk. [43] The HBC had been granted exclusive trading rights to the Hudson Bay watershed by King Charles II of England through the Royal Charter of 1670. Because of this, they believed they had the right to sell this land. [44] The Métis had created a strong presence and economy at the Red River Settlement; however, this meant little to the HBC.

As Euro-Canadian settlers entered Red River, frustrations grew amongst Métis families living there. A primary issue was that Métis were considered socially inferior by the HBC, and they therefore refused to recognize Métis governance and rights to the land in the region. [45] The HBC disrespected Métis **self-governance** in Red River on several occasions, damaging their relationship over time.

Selkirk's Pemmican Proclamation

On January 8, 1814, Selkirk Governor Miles Macdonell issued the Pemmican Proclamation, a public ban on the export of pemmican and any other provisions. [46] A ban was also placed on the buffalo hunt within the boundaries of the Red River Settlement. Six months later, Macdonell also banned the running and use of any horses on the buffalo hunts. Métis were frustrated by having their land taken over and their economic livelihood threatened. These events eventually led to an armed confrontation involving the Métis and NWC against the HBC.

The Victory of Frog Plain (commonly known as the "Battle of Seven Oaks")

The Pemmican Proclamation was a catalyst that heightened tensions in the Red River Settlement. When Governor Miles Macdonell ordered that pemmican be seized from the Nor' Westers, he revealed his willingness to use violence to control Métis and other trading partners. [47] Métis and NWC workers both depended on pemmican to survive, so this was a direct attack on their economy and way of life.

Despite these difficulties, the Métis were forced to trade to provide for their families. The Canadian government had sent in a new Governor, Robert Semple, to the Red River Settlement to control the tension. Amidst a variety of passive attacks in their relationship, the Métis turned to Cuthbert Grant for leadership.

In the spring of 1816, Semple ordered the HBC to capture and burn Fort Gibraltar and the NWC fort near Fort Douglas. The NWC and Métis interpreted this as an act of war. [48]

> When Grant called in his men, they came from all over the North-West, from Athabasca, the English River district, the Saskatchewan, and Swan River. It was this group, the boys Grant called his *jeunes gens,* [say: june-jen] that would come together at the Frog Plain on June 19, 1816 to fight the Selkirk Settlers. They gave the name and origin story to the new nation of the North-West.

–Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother*, 55.

In order to provide supplies to the Nor‘ Wester brigades, Cuthbert Grant and his Métis force left Portage La Prairie on June 18, 1816. With their carts packed with pemmican, they arrived at Frog Plain on the evening of June 19, when their plans unravelled immediately. After an exchange of words between the Métis and Governor Semple’s party, shots were fired. Within fifteen minutes, twenty settlers, including Governor Semple, were dead.

Following the battle, the proud Métis celebrated their Nation and strength. Cuthbert Grant became their new hero, and the Nation sang a newly composed anthem declaring their victory, “La Chanson des **Bois-Brûlés**.” The lyrics of the song memorialize the Métis experience in the conflict. [49] The Victory of Frog Plain is largely regarded as the defining moment of a unique Métis identity.

La Chanson des Bois-Brûlés

Pierre Falcon was the Métis man who authored the song of the Métis who declared the Victory of Frog Plain. It has remained in Métis oral tradition for generations. As a French song of oral tradition, the song has a few variations. These are a few excerpts, with a translation, from one of the trusted versions remembered among Métis across the Homeland. [50]

Voulez-vous écouter chanter / Une chanson de vérité? / Le dix-neuf de juin la bande des Bois-Brulés / Sont arrivé comme des brave guerriers.	Do you want to listen sing / A song of truth? / The nineteen of June the Bois-Brulé band / Arrived like brave warriors.
En arrivant à la Grenouillière / Nous avons pris trois prisonniers / Trois prisonniers des Arkanys / Qui sont ici pour piller notre pays [...]	Arriving at la Grenouillière / We took three prisoners / Three prisoners of the Arkanys / Who are here to plunder our country. [...]
Tout aussitôt nous avons deviré / Nous avons été les rencontrer / J'avons cerné la bande des grenadiers / (Ils) sont immobiles, ils sont demontés.	Immediately we changed / We went to meet them / I have surrounded the band of grenadiers / (They) are motionless, they are dismounted.
J'avons agi comme des gens d'honneur / J'avons envoyé un ambassadeur: «Le Gouverneur, voulez-vous arréter / Un petit moment, nous voulons vous parler?» [...]	I acted like people of honor / I sent an ambassador: "Governor, do you want to stop / A little while, we want talk to you?" [...]
Ayant vu passer tous ces Bois-Brulés / Il a parti pour les épouvanter / Etant parti pour les épouvanter / Il s'est trompé, il s'est fait tuer.	Having seen all these Bois-Brulés pass by / He left to terrify them / Being left to frighten them / He was wrong, he was killed.
Il s'est trompé, il s'est fait tuer / Un' quantité des ses grenadiers / J'avons tué presque tout 'son armée / Rien que quatre ou cinq ca l'ont pu se sauver.	He was wrong, he got killed / A quantity of his grenadiers / I killed almost everything 'his army / Just four or five that got him away.
Si vous aviez vu tous ces Anglais / Tous ces Bois-Brulés après / De butte en butte, les Anglais culbutaient / Les Bois-Brulé lachaient des cris de joie!	If you had seen all those Englishmen / All those Bois-Brulés afterwards / From butte to butte, the English tumbled / Les Bois-Brulé let out cries of joy!

There are multiple versions of this song in historical records. Complin's recording of the lyrics is said to be the one remembered by Pierre Falcon's relatives, and so it was chosen to share here, despite some issues with the transcription of the tune. Note: "Arkanys" is understood to be what the Bois-Brulés called their opposition at the time.
Recorded by Margaret Complin, "Pierre Falcon: The Singer of the Plains," *Winnipeg Tribune*, July 9 1938. Cited in Monique Giroux, "Singing for Frog Plain: Representing Canadian/Metis Relations through Falcon's Songs, *Ethnologies* 37, no. 1 (2015): 43–64.

Métis Homeland Heroes: Pierre Falcon

Pierre Falcon is commonly toted as the "bard of the Métis." [51] Métis around the Homeland remember him as a spontaneous songwriter, capturing the oral history of the Métis Nation in song.

> His ballads were sung by buffalo hunters around campfires, by voyageurs to the rhythm of their paddles, by the Red River cart brigades, by the Metis at parties.

–George and Terry Goulet, *The Metis: Memorable Events and Memorable Personalities* (Calgary: FabJob, 2008), 197.

Figure 19. Pierre Falcon, ca. 1860–70. Photo Courtesy of the Archives of Manitoba: 363-P-80-F/1-2.

Pierre was born in the Swan River district of the North-West on June 4, 1793. He grew up alongside the family of another famous Métis leader, Cuthbert Grant. Falcon and his wife, Mary Grant (Cuthbert Grant's sister), raised seven children. One of his children, Jean-Baptiste, would grow up as a skilled buffalo hunter and then played a key role in the success of the Battle of Grand Coteau of 1851. [52] While Pierre himself was never sent to the frontlines of Métis resistance movements, he was posted by Cuthbert Grant to guard supplies at the Victory of Frog Plain. Even at the age of 76, he volunteered to escort Euro-Canadian settlers out of Métis lands at the beginning of the Red River Resistance. Though due to his age he was not sent, he is remembered for his fierce Métis pride and as a "saintly, tender, noble old man" by his descendants. [53]

Who is Telling the Story? Victory, or Battle

Métis celebrate the success of their resistance against Euro-Canadian control during this event, and so it is remembered as a victory in the languages traditionally spoken by Métis. Euro-Canadian histories remember it differently, calling this event the "**Battle of Seven Oaks**." Their history does not remember the success of Métis resistance. It is remembered by Euro-Canadians as a failed attempt to control the Métis Nation and their land.

> To this day the battle is known to the Métis Nation in Michif as Paashkiiyaakanaan daan la Prayrii di la Goornouyayr, in French as *la Victoire de la Grenouillière* and in English as the Victory of Frog Plain. In Michif, *paashkiiyaakanaan* means 'We won!' The term does not translate as mere victory; it carries a tone of triumphant self-congratulation.

–Teillet, *The North-West* is Our Mother, 66.

The Victory of Frog Plain

La Victoire De la Grenouillière

(say: La Vic-twar de la Grawn-wayr)

Paashkiiyaakanaan daan la Prayrii di la Goornouyayr

(say: pah-shkee-yah-kah-nahn dawn la pray-ree dee la Goor-noo-yayr)

The Battle of Seven Oaks

Métis Homeland Heroes: Cuthbert Grant

Cuthbert Grant's accomplishments on behalf of the Métis during the Victory of Frog Plain established him as a widely celebrated Métis leader. It was during this event that, for the first time, the Métis asserted themselves as a Nation. Cuthbert Grant ignited the passion and unification of the Métis Nation and is regarded by many today as the first leader of the Métis Nation.

> "Cuthbert Grant was born right near Qu'Appelle in the 1790s and he becomes the first leader of the Métis Nation. He' s associated with their origin story and the battle of Seven Oaks or the Victory of the Frog Plain."

–Jean Teillet, quoted in Creeson Agecoutay, "Q&A: Great Grandneice of Louis Riel Speaks at Government House," *CTV News Regina*, October 15, 2019, https://regina.ctvnews.ca/q-a-great-grandniece-of-louis-riel-speaks-at-government-house-1.4639780.

Figure 20. Cuthbert James Grant, ca. 1890. Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan: R-A537(1).

When Grant was a child, his father's health began to fail. He was then taken under the guardianship of William McGillvary, a NWC agent in Montreal. [54] McGillvary had Cuthbert baptized at the St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church and formally educated in Montreal. [55] In 1812, Grant returned to the prairies as a clerk in the NWC's Upper Red River District. [56] He immersed himself in travelling, hunting, and living with his people. [57]

Grant was initially charged for the role he played in the Victory of Frog Plain; however, by 1818, the charges were dropped. Following the trial, Grant returned to Red River, then made his way to join his Métis kin in Qu'Appelle, in what is now Saskatchewan. In 1824, he began to farm in a region called "White Horse Plain." It was there that he and 80 other Métis families formed the Grantown Settlement (now St. François Xavier, MB). [58]

In the aftermath of the Victory of Frog Plain, Grant was made a leader in the organization of their bi-annual buffalo hunts. [59] In his later life, Grant continued to live Métis ways of being, taking up the buffalo hunt and trade, working to build a better relationship with the HBC, and leading Métis resilience in Grantown until his unfortunate death after falling off his horse on July 15, 1854. [60]

> Grant was fulfilling his role of leader of the Métis Nation. He was able to persuade them [the Métis] to settle [at Grantown] because of the completeness of his identity with them. And because his leadership was effective, Grant himself through his care of his people was transformed from the youthful scourge of the colony to its friend and defender. His story is not to be separated from that of his people and his settlement. They are interwoven from beginning to end.

–Margaret Arnett MacLeod and William Lewis Morton, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown: Warden of the Plains of the Red River* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1963), https://www-deslibris-ca.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/ID/448058.

Flying the Métis Flag

It was around the time of the Victory of Frog Plain, sometime in 1815 or 1816, that the Métis chose a flag to visually unify their Nation. Whether depicted on a blue or red background, the Métis Nation flag has been, and remains, a traditional celebration of the Métis Nation's heritage. Métis proudly share the symbolism representing their ethnogenesis, the joining of two cultures, and the resilience of the Nation. The Métis infinity flag predates Canada's Maple Leaf flag.

Figure 21. Métis Flags. Photo courtesy of the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Who is Telling the Story? History of the Métis Flag

As educators continue in their journey of learning about Métis Nation Homeland history, they will encounter many complex stories. One example that educators should be aware of is the complexity of the history of the Métis Nation Flag. Métis have had several flags throughout their history across the Homeland. The two that have played the most prominent roles in unifying the Métis Nation for over two centuries have been the blue and red infinity flags.

One primary complexity that educators should be aware of is the story about the origin of the Métis Nation flag. Some histories recall that, in 1815, the infinity flag was given to the Métis by the NWC (and/or a specific representative). Discussions in 2020 arose about the evidence supporting this memory, as the idea that Métis were "passive recipients" from the company in 1815, as opposed to a self-determining Nation, is challenged. [61]

Another historical complexity in the story of the Métis Nation flag concerns colour. Some interpretations in Métis memories claim that the colours denote a relationship with either of the trading companies, or distinct kinship connections. [62] Other interpretations claim that one flag had more historical importance than the other, while still others claim that both were equally important.

These complexities are valuable for learning about and supporting a reflection about the way citizens navigate diversity amongst the unified Métis Nation. As Métis across the Homeland determine the details about the infinity flags, they remain in agreement that "[t]hough the historical origins of the infinity flag continue to be a source of debate there is no doubt that the Métis flag is carried today as a symbol of continuity and pride." [63]

HBC/NWC Merger, 1821

In addition to being a testament to the strength and self-governance of the Métis Nation, the Victory of Frog Plain was an impetus for significant economic change in the fur trade. Over the next few years, both the HBC and NWC faced declining profits and pressure from the government to gain control of the lands of the North-West. In 1821, after a "vicious fur trade war," the NWC was forced to merge with the HBC. [64]

The Métis trading partners and employees of the NWC shifted to the jurisdiction of the HBC, and many of the complex kinship ties were lost. Wages and benefits were reduced, and long-term contracts with the company were no longer commonplace. Despite the importance of establishing intimate social relationships to the Métis, the HBC attempted to reduce the numbers of people at its inland posts to the minimum in order to diminish its obligations and responsibilities in supporting trade families. [65] These events caused trade patterns to shift, displacing people from their homes and traditional routes. Slowly, Euro-Canadians became the biggest beneficiaries of the trade shift, disempowering the Indigenous communities in the trading relationships. [66]

Figure 22. Métis Scouts, ca. 1842–1874. Photo Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan: R-A2436.

> The situation changed with the merger and the growth of Red River; the whole context in which company families lived was much modified. Conscious organization now extended into many areas of domestic life as well as commercial activity. The new monopoly was not just a trading concern; it also took over the colonial administration of Red River. By extension, and in the absence of any other British or Canadian governing agent, its administrative power and duties spread to encompass the whole of the Northwest.
>
> – Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980), 201.

Figure 23. Hudson's Bay Company Post at Ile-a-la-Crosse, ca. 1939. Photo Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan: R-A14904.

Pierre-Guillaume Sayer Trial, 1849

The merging of the fur trade companies impacted the relationship that Métis had with Euro-Canadian traders for generations. The HBC imposed laws over the trade, resulting in another major conflict in 1849. On May 17, 1849, Pierre-Guillaume Sayer (say: Pe-air Gwe-yawm Sa-yer) and three other Métis traders from the Red River Settlement were brought to trial in the court of the HBC for trading furs in violation of the Company's newly implemented rules.

> Métis understood themselves as being both *natives of the country*[447] and *the descendants of the original lords of the soil*,[448] a reality that entitled them to specific privileges such as a share in land title with their Indigenous kin and the ability to exist independent of Company authority.

–Gaudry, *"Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk,"* 184.
Citation 447: James Sinclair and 19 Other Metis and Halfbreed Free-Traders, "Fourteen Questions Letter, August 29, 1845," in *History of the North-West*, ed. Alexander Begg (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., 1894), 261.
Citation 448: See Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 33–34.

Métis, who had been self-governing in their trade for generations, were furious with the injustice. A large group of Métis, including Louis Riel Sr., surrounded the courthouse. The Métis community's protest was a strong statement of Métis unity and collective nationhood. The rally of protest by Métis influenced the trial, resulting in Sayer and the other men not being punished for their actions. Métis demonstrated their power in the region, ending the HBC's trade monopoly. The assembled crowd at the trial celebrated by chanting "le commerce est libre" (say: luh comm-air-se ay lee-breh; "trade is free." [67]

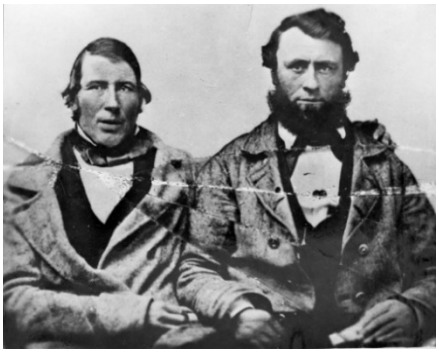


Figure 23. Jean-Louis Riel (r), father of Louis Riel, with his friend Léveillé. Library and Archives Canada: PA-139074.

"Le commerce est libre!"

"Louis Riel Sr. was on the church steps in St. Boniface that morning and made a big speech and got all of the people to come over the river to the Winnipeg side. There were some four hundred horsemen mounted with guns pointed at the building where the trial was going on, and Louis Riel Sr. and James Sinclair walked Sayer into the trial, and at the end of it they walk out yelling 'Le commerce est libre' . . . . Louis Riel was there, he was at church listening to his dad speak and he was five. He talked about it for the rest of his life. He said it was a formative moment of his life, when he watched his father make this big political speech."

–Jean Teillet. Bryan P. Schwartz, "Interview: Jean Teillet," *The Manitoba Law Journal* 41, no. 2 (2018): 311–353.

Battle of Grand Coteau, 1851

The victory of the Sayer Trial bolstered Métis unity and nationhood in the North-West. They celebrated their distinct **sovereignty,** affirmed by the victory of the trial, despite the control Euro-Canadian institutions persistently imposed on the Métis. Their relationship with Euro-Canadians was, however, not the only challenge the Métis Nation faced during this time. Throughout the mid-1800s, Métis and Dakota-Sioux (say: dah-koh-ta soo) had a series of territorial disputes over bison hunting grounds, which became a major conflict in 1851.

> In June 1851, a party of St Francois Xavier Métis hunters travelled south to meet a large group of buffalo hunters from other parts of the Red River, Pembina, and North Dakota. The St Francois Xavier party, led by Captain Jean Baptiste Falcon (son of Pierre, the Métis bard who composed the Battle at Seven Oaks), separated. Captain Falcon and 67 hunters, their women, children, and a priest, Father Lafleche, moved southeast of Missouri, Minnesota, toward North Dakota.

–Beatrice Demetrius, Battle of Grand Coteau Storyboard, Métis Nation of Alberta.

When the Métis had set up camp, they sent out five buffalo runners to the nearest bluff to assess any immediate danger. The Dakota-Sioux ambushed them, taking three prisoners. The two others warned the rest of the camp, and the entire community went into military defence mode. The Métis arranged their Red River Carts in a circle around their possessions, forming a **laager** (say: lah-ger) as a barricade. [68] It was intended that the women and children would be hunkered down safely in the shallow trenches behind the Red River Carts during the conflict. There were several hunters and boys who could handle guns, including Gabriel Dumont, who remained, awaiting the imminent conflict. [69]

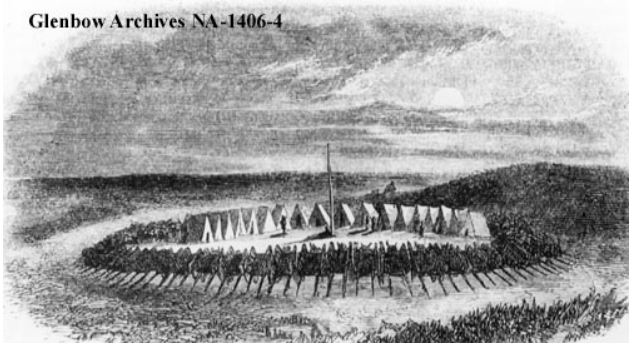


Figure 24. This 1859 sketch of a Métis camp at night has a similar set-up to the laager that would be used in battle.

"Enroute to Red River," published in *Harper's Monthly*, January 1859, 175. Glenbow Archives: NA-1406-4.

The Dakota-Sioux attacked, assuming that it would be an easy victory, and they taunted the Métis. [70] They were shocked that the Métis had no intention of surrendering and the Métis were able to hold up under three days of sustained attack. Eventually, after making no dent in the Métis defences, the Dakota-Sioux quit. By the end of the Battle of Grand Coteau, the Dakota-Sioux had lost between eighty and ninety warriors, while the Métis had only lost one man. The Dakota-Sioux then acknowledged the Métis' military prowess, dubbing them the "Masters of the Plains." [71]

> This battle has entered into Métis legend, memorialized as the battle that made the Métis people "the masters of the plains wherever they might choose to march."

–Gaudry, "*Kaa tipeyimishoyaahk*," 159.

Métis Homeland Heroes: Gabriel Dumont

The Dumont family is one of the most prominent Métis families in Homeland history. Métis across the Homeland cherish the passion and strength that Gabriel Dumont brought to the Métis Nation through buffalo hunts, community leadership, military efforts, and Nation relationships with both First Nations and Euro-Canadians.

> Gabriel Dumont was much more than the voiceless, one dimensional adjutant general of the 1885 "Métis Rebellion" led by Louis Riel, as he is so often portrayed in [Canadian] history books: he was, first and foremost, a political and cultural leader of the Métis people, and his historic dictations reveal him to be a man of considerable intellectual power, as well as a redoubtable man of action.
>
> –Michael Barnholden, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks*, rev. 2nd ed. (Talonbooks, 2009), 13.

Figure 25. Gabriel Dumont at Red River, ca. 1880s. Glenbow Archives: NA-1063-1.

Gabriel Dumont was born in 1837 at the Red River Settlement to Isidore Dumont and Julie Laframboise. This Métis hunting family had a noteworthy history of brigade leadership throughout the Métis Homeland. Growing up in a trading family on the prairies allowed Gabriel Dumont to master the necessities of the prairie lifestyle. Though he never learned to read or write, Dumont learned about religion and became a leader in **diplomacy**, politics, and trade. [72] He was proficient in seven languages. Dumont developed excellent skills as a marksman and a horseman. He also had extensive knowledge of prairie geography. [73]

At a very young age, Dumont earned a reputation as a fierce hunter and brave warrior. Throughout the 1870s, he maintained and strengthened many kinship and trading ties on behalf of the Métis throughout the Homeland. Among his most memorable contributions to the Métis were Resistance efforts. When the **provisional government** was created in 1869, Dumont was leading the Métis military force.

During the Battle of Batoche, Dumont led more than just strategic military movements. He was also remembered for his compassion for the community, taking time to make moccasins for the barefoot children and distribute food and blankets. [74] After the battle, he fled to Montana with his family until his amnesty was announced 1886. He took up work performing his marksmanship in a travelling show called "Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show" and took up other work before returning to Batoche in 1893. Back at home, he resided with Métis still living in the area. He took up small business work and orated two life memoirs before passing from heart failure in 1906.

Métis Resistance Movements

Métis had asserted themselves as an Indigenous Nation in the North-West several times by the late 1800s. Both First Nations and Euro-Canadian groups acknowledged their strength. Despite several interactions with the Métis Nation, the Euro-Canadian government ignored the rights of the "**half-breeds**" in their own Homeland. Government representatives moved throughout the North-West, engaging in **treaty** relationships with First Nations. This disregard by the government bolstered the sense of entitlement to the lands of the Métis Nation, which in turn incited Métis to organize themselves in new ways reflecting their Nation's values of relational living and resilience.

"The way in which the Government officials treated the just demands of the Métis was inexcusable and contributed to bring about the rebellion. Had they had votes like the white men or if, like the Indians, they had been numerous enough to command respect and overawe red tape, without doubt the machinery of the government would have functioned for them; but being only Halfbreeds, they were put off with eternal promises, until patience ceased to be a virtue. It was callous and cruel neglect of this portion of the population that led to armed insurrection."

–James Brady, first Secretary-Treasurer of the Métis Association of Alberta, speaks using the language of the community at the time. Cited in Métis Nation of Alberta, "Background to Negotiations with Canada," http://www.albertametisgov.com/background/.

Red River Resistance

By the 1860s, Métis were industrious across the Homeland. Some worked in a variety of capacities in the trade economy, annually participated in the buffalo hunt, attended formal schooling around the world, and built up agriculture. At this time, the Government of Canada and Euro-Canadian settlers were looking to colonize the lands of the West. By 1868, "nationalism and **expansionism** had become intertwined," and the Euro-Canadians were passionate to see the prairies claimed as their own lands. [75] Their one-sided vision of conquering the prairies consumed their thinking to the point where they disregarded their trading partners: the Métis and many First Nations.

Both the Canadian government and Euro-Canadian settlers began to move into Métis Homelands to begin claiming the lands as their own. Disregarding the Métis already living in the Red River area, Governor William MacDougall commissioned a group to illegally begin surveying the lands. This sparked the formal resistance efforts of the Métis into action.

The Canadian government "wanted to introduce itself into the country as if to a deserted land with no regard for people who lived there. . . . [T]he surveyors . . . set about drawing lines all over the place, whether they were on private property or not."

–Louis Schmidt, quoted in Candace Savage, *Strangers in the House: A Prairie Story of Bigotry and Belonging* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2019).

> When the surveyors refused to leave the land, Nault (a Métis who could not speak English) contacted the fluently bilingual Louis Riel. . . . After a verbal altercation with the surveyors, during which Riel stepped on their chain, Riel with a group of Métis peacefully but firmly made the trespassers desists and withdraw.

–Goulet, *The Metis: Memorable Events and Memorable Personalities*, 121.

As Métis collectively defended the lands of a man in their community, the Red River Resistance officially began on July 5, 1869. [76] The conflict incited Riel to call together the National Committee of the Métis on October 16, 1869, whose purpose was to protect their social, political, and cultural rights. John Bruce was elected as President, and Louis Riel (only twenty-five years old at the time) was elected as Secretary. [77]

Following the escorting of Governor MacDougall and Euro-Canadian **land surveyors** off Métis lands, Métis seized Upper Fort Garry (nearby to Red River) from HBC control on November 2, 1869. On November 16, 1869, the National Committee of Métis became the Convention of Twenty-Four, comprised of twelve French-speaking and twelve English-speaking members of the Red River Settlement.

Figure 26. Upper Fort Garry, where the Provisional Government circa 1870 would have met.
Photo courtesy of William James Topley, Library and Archives Canada: PA-011337.

On December 1, 1869, Métis defined the ***List of Rights*.** The *List of Rights,* shared below, outlined what they considered necessary for the Métis Nation and other communities in the Red River area to enter into the Confederation forming to the east.

December 1, 1869, was also the day that Canada was originally supposed to annex Rupert's Land. This was delayed due to the ongoing resistance. Governor MacDougall was impatiently waiting for direction to return to Red River, lands over which he felt he had rightful authority. He took it upon himself to write a proclamation to declare himself Governor over the Red River area, signing it himself in the Queen's name. His fraudulent declaration was quickly discovered, and he was dismissed.

That same week, on December 8, the Convention of Twenty-Four formally declared the first provisional government in a "Declaration of the People of Rupert's Land and the North West." The provisional government would be the vehicle for asserting their rights as a Nation to the Canadian government.

> A provisional government is a government formed to ensure the community is well-represented and taken care of during a certain time or event.

–Goulet, *The Metis: Memorable Events and Memorable Personalities*, 124.

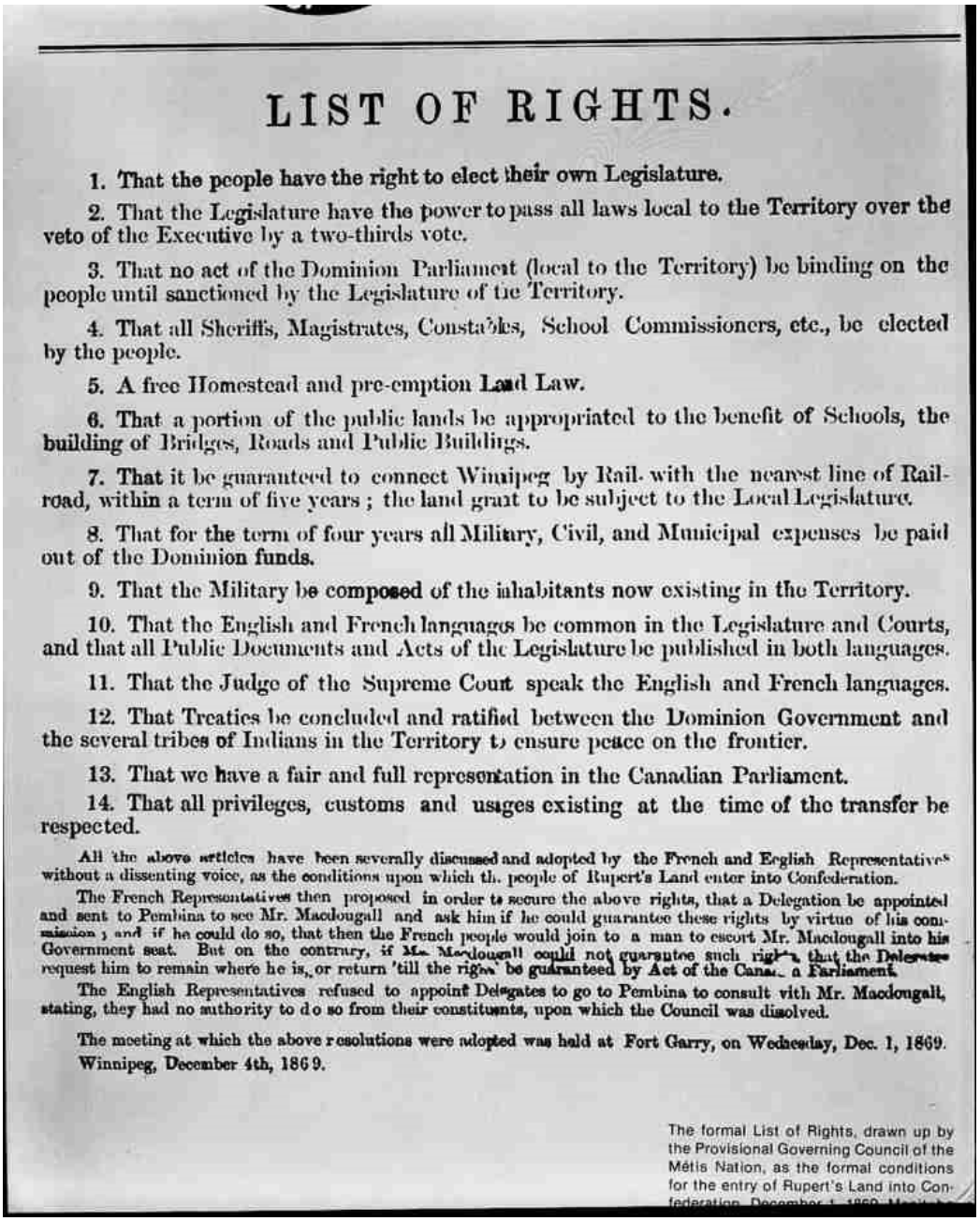
Figure 27. Louis Riel and his council, 1869–1870. Photo Courtesy of University of Manitoba Archives: Kenneth Hayes Collection, uofm:hayes--10719/hayes : uofm:9176.

Following the declaration of the *List of Rights* and the provisional government, Canada was determined to sway the Métis and non-Métis alliance in Red River to turn against the Convention of Twenty-Four and the provisional government. In response, the **Convention of Forty** was convened to discuss and negotiate the promises offered by the representatives. The Convention of Forty gathered a group with twenty French-speaking and twenty English-speaking Red River residents. They formed the second provisional government, and re-drafted the List of Rights on May 9, 1870, which better represented the rights and values of all residents in Red River.

List of Rights, 1869–1870

There were four iterations of the *List of Rights.* The first one, shared here, was published by the National Committee of Métis, who established the Convention of 12 on December 1, 1869. The final accepted draft was constructed by the second provisional government, a democratically elected group with twenty French-speaking and twenty English-speaking members. This balance allowed an equal incorporation of voices from among all the residents in the Red River Settlement.

List of Rights, December 1, 1869 (first rendition)



LIST OF RIGHTS.

1. That the people have the right to elect their own Legislature.

2. That the Legislature have the power to pass all laws local to the Territory over the veto of the Executive by a two-thirds vote.

3. That no act of the Dominion Parliament (local to the Territory) be binding on the people until sanctioned by the Legislature of the Territory.

4. That all Sheriffs, Magistrates, Constables, School Commissioners, etc., be elected by the people.

5. A free Homestead and pre-emption Land Law.

6. That a portion of the public lands be appropriated to the benefit of Schools, the building of Bridges, Roads and Public Buildings.

7. That it be guaranteed to connect Winnipeg by Rail with the nearest line of Railroad, within a term of five years; the land grant to be subject to the Local Legislature.

8. That for the term of four years all Military, Civil, and Municipal expenses be paid out of the Dominion funds.

9. That the Military be composed of the inhabitants now existing in the Territory.

10. That the English and French languages be common in the Legislature and Courts, and that all Public Documents and Acts of the Legislature be published in both languages.

11. That the Judge of the Supreme Court speak the English and French languages.

12. That Treaties be concluded and ratified between the Dominion Government and the several tribes of Indians in the Territory to ensure peace on the frontier.

13. That we have a fair and full representation in the Canadian Parliament.

14. That all privileges, customs and usages existing at the time of the transfer be respected.

All the above articles have been severally discussed and adopted by the French and English Representatives without a dissenting voice, as the conditions upon which the people of Rupert's Land enter into Confederation.

The French Representatives then proposed in order to secure the above rights, that a Delegation be appointed and sent to Pembina to see Mr. Macdougall and ask him if he could guarantee these rights by virtue of his commission; and if he could do so, that then the French people would join to a man to escort Mr. Macdougall into his Government seat. But on the contrary, if Mr. Macdougall could not guarantee such rights, that the Delegates request him to remain where he is, or return 'till the rights be guaranteed by Act of the Canadian Parliament.

The English Representatives refused to appoint Delegates to go to Pembina to consult with Mr. Macdougall, stating, they had no authority to do so from their constituents, upon which the Council was dissolved.

The meeting at which the above resolutions were adopted was held at Fort Garry, on Wednesday, Dec. 1, 1869.

Winnipeg, December 4th, 1869.

The formal List of Rights, drawn up by the Provisional Governing Council of the Métis Nation, as the formal conditions for the entry of Rupert's Land into Confederation. December 1, 1869. Métis [illegible]

Figure 28. Draft of the List of Rights, December 1, 1869. Métis Nation of Alberta, https://www.facebook.com/ABMetis/photos/a.389854408115/10158760940673116/?type=3.

List of Rights, May 9, 1870 (fourth and final rendition)

1. That this province be governed:
    a. By a Lieutenant-Governor, appointed by the Governor-General of Canada;
    b. By a Senate;
    c. By a Legislature chosen by the people with a responsible ministry.
2. That, until such time as the increase of population in this country entitle us to a greater number, we have two representatives in the Senate and four in the Commons of Canada.

3. That in entering the Confederation the Province of the Northwest be completely free from the public debt of Canada; and if called upon to assume a part of the said debt of Canada, that it only be after having received from Canada the same amount for which the said Province of the Northwest should be held responsible.

4. That the annual sum of $80,000 be allotted by the Dominion of Canada to the Legislature of the Province of the Northwest

5. That all properties, rights and privileges enjoyed by us up to this day be respected, and that the recognition and settlement of customs, usages and privileges be left exclusively to the decision of the Local Legislature.

6. That this country be submitted to no direct taxation except such as may be imposed by the local legislature for municipal or other local purposes.

7. That the schools be separate, and that the public money for schools be distributed among the different religious denominations in proportion to their respective populations according to the system of the province of Quebec.

8. That the determination of the qualifications of members for the parliament of the province or for the parliament of Canada be left to the local legislature.

9. That in this province, with the exception of the Indians, who are neither civilized nor settled, every man having attained the age of 21 years, and every foreigner being a British subject, after having resided three years in this country, and being Possessed of a house, be entitled to vote at elections for members of the local legislature and of the Canadian Parliament, and that every foreigner other than a British subject, having resided here during the same prior, and being proprietor of a house, be likewise entitled to vote on condition of taking the oath of allegiance. It is understood that this article is subject to amendment, by the local legislature exclusively.

10. That the bargain of the Hudson Bay Company with respect to the transfer of this country to the Dominion of Canada, never have in any case an effect prejudicial to the rights of the Northwest.

11. That the Local Legislature of this Province have full control over all the lands of the Northwest.

12. That a commission of engineers appointed by Canada explore the various districts of the Northwest and lay before the Local Legislature within the space of five years a report of the mineral wealth of the country.

13. That treaties be concluded between Canada and the different Indian tribes of the Northwest, at the request and with the co-operation of the Local Legislature.

14. That an uninterrupted steam communication from Lake Superior to Fort Garry be guaranteed to be completed within the space of five years, as well as the construction of a railroad connecting the American railway as soon as the latter reaches the international boundary.

15. That all public buildings and constructions be at the cost of the Canadian Exchequer.

16. That both the English and French languages be common in the Legislature and in the Courts; and that all public documents as well as the acts of the Legislature be published in both languages.

17. That the Lieutenant-Governor to be appointed for the province of the Northwest be familiar with both the English and French languages.

18. That the judge of the Supreme Court speak the English and French languages.

19. That all the debts contracted by the Provisional government of the territory of the Northwest, now called Assiniboia, in consequence of the illegal and inconsiderate measures adopted by Canadian officials to bring about a civil war in our midst, be paid out of the Dominion treasury, and that none of the Provisional government, or any of those acting under them, be in any way held liable or responsible with regard to the movement or any of the actions which led to the present negotiations .

Figure 29. Transcription provided by Lawrence Barkwell, *Metis List of Rights: The Evolution of the List from the First to Fourth Iteration*, compiled by Lawrence Barkwell and the Louis Riel Institute, https://www.scribd.com/document/57022943/Metis-List-of-Rights-1870. Bolding added.

In 1885, Louis Riel recounted the events of the Red River Resistance during his trial. The colonial imposition by Euro-Canadian settlers was an ongoing issue, with continued effects lasting even today. Read the following transcription of his speech, and consider how Riel described the entrance of Canadians in the Red River area during this time:

1869. Or if they are two troubles entirely different, I say they are not. Canada, no, I ought not to say Canada, because it was a certain number of individuals, perhaps seven or eight hundred that can have passed for Canada, but they came to Red River, and they wanted to take possession of the country without consulting the people. True it was the Half-breed people There were a certain number of white pioneers among the population, but the great majority were Half-breeds.

We took up arms against the invaders from the East without knowing them. They were so far apart from us, on the other side of the Lakes, that it cannot be said that we had any hatred against them. We did not know them. They came without notification. They came boldly. We said: Who are they? They said: We are the possessors of the country. Well, knowing that it was not true, we done against those parties coming from the East what we used to do against the Indians from the South and from the West, when they would invade us. Public opinion in the States helped us a great deal.... I

"[A] certain number of individuals, perhaps seven or eight hundred that can have passed for Canada, but they came to Red River, and they wanted to take possession of the country without consulting the people."

Figure 30. Louis Riel (1844–1885; defendant), *The Queen vs. Louis Riel: Accused and convicted of the crime of high treason: Report of trial at Regina: Appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench, Manitoba: Appeal to the Privy Council, England: Petition for medical examination of the convict: List of petitions for commutation of sentence, Ottawa* (Ottawa: Printed by the Queen's Printer, 1886).

While the Métis and non-Métis leaders in the Red River Settlement were taking political action to protect the community, some Euro-Canadian groups in the area were causing trouble. One of the opposing groups that entered Red River were the **Orangemen.** The Orangemen were a "headstrong" political and religious society with a home base in Ireland. [78] The Orange Order in Canada was passionately anti-Catholic, anti-Métis, and pro-expansionism. One of the more violent and unpredictable Orangemen, Thomas Scott, murdered a Métis man named "Parisien." [79] Because of this, Scott was convicted by the provisional government of murder and jailed. He escaped imprisonment and tried to incite the community to overthrow the provisional government, but Scott was soon recaptured.

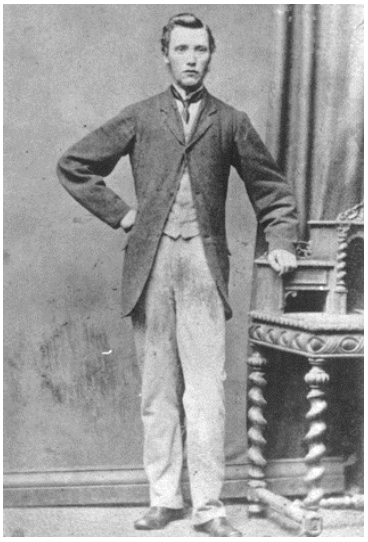


Figure 31. Thomas Scott, unknown source, in John Boyko, *Canadian Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Thomas Scott," ihttps://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/thomas-scott.

In prison, Scott constantly swore at and threatened the Métis guards, including Louis Riel when he approached Scott to reason with him. Riel ordered a court-martial for him, a trial that Riel himself was not a part of. [80] On March 3, 1870, Scott was determined guilty, with an order to be executed.

The death of Thomas Scott inflamed anti-French and anti-Catholic sentiments throughout the Dominion of Canada, mainly in Ontario, leading to much of the vilifying narrative about Louis Riel today. [81]

Who is Telling the Story? Execution or Murder

The historical narrative about Louis Riel describes him as an anti-Canadian villain, guilty of the murder of Thomas Scott, whereas Métis remember his contributions to the Métis Nation. The two historical illustrations below provide examples of the two narratives often used to portray Louis Riel and the Métis in very different ways. In one, Métis are depicted as a violent, aggressive community. In the other, Métis are illustrated with solemn faces, taking part in justice for their community. It is essential that, when teaching about Métis history, illustrations and stories are critically chosen to ensure that the voice and history of Métis are authentically shared.

Figure 32. "Shooting of Thomas Scott," *Canadian Illustrated News: A Commemorative Portfolio/Selected and Introduced by Peter Desbarats* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, [c1970]); "Pt. 4: The West" (Saturday, January 15, 1870), 5.

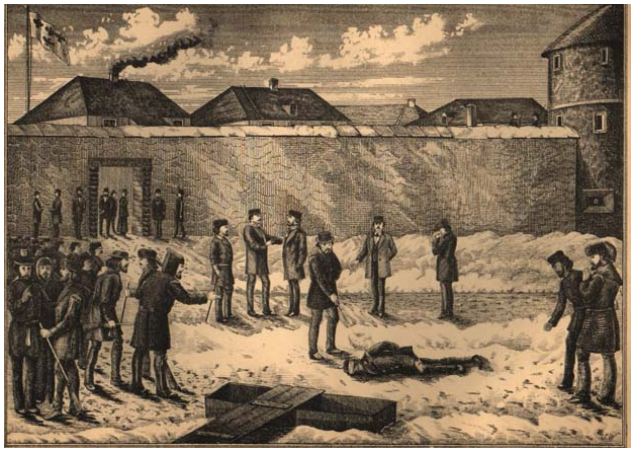


Figure 33. "The Execution of Scott," in Elliott and Brokovski, *Preliminary Investigation and Trial of Ambroise D. Lepine for the Murder of Thomas Scott* (Montreal: Canadian Press, Burland-Desbarats, 1874).

On May 12, 1870, parts of the *List of Rights* became enshrined as the ***Manitoba Act***, and Manitoba entered Confederation as an amendment to the Canadian Constitution, then known as the *British North America Act, 1867*.

Aspects of the *List of Rights* were implemented in the *Manitoba Act*, such as provincial status within the Dominion of Canada and English and French language rights in the new legislature and the courts. Protestant and Roman Catholic educational rights were included in the Act. The Canadian government agreed to pay subsidies to Manitoba, and approximately 1.4 million acres of land was set aside specifically for the collective Métis Nation. The province received four seats in the federal Parliament, which was a relatively strong representation given how small the population was at the time. The Métis were granted the province of Manitoba; however, the Canadian government retained control over western Canada.

> As far as the Métis were concerned, the Manitoba Act guaranteed their rights, and they quite expected to become the leading force in the new government of Manitoba. In the Canadian system, the majority rules, and the Metis and HBC People were the majority in Rupert's Land in 1870.

–Fred J. Shore, *Threads in the Sash: The Story of the Métis People* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 2018), 75.

In August 1870, following the creation of Manitoba, Prime Minister of Canada John A. Macdonald sent British Army regulars alongside several volunteers to occupy the new Provincial Legislature under the name **Red River Expeditionary Force.** This was meant to prevent Métis from taking any more political action. [82] The Canadian soldiers were remembered for two things: their boasting about how they were going to avenge Thomas Scott through the murder of Louis Riel; and their reckless, lawless behaviour at Red River. [83]

Figure 34. Ambroise Dydime Lepine, one of the Métis leaders during the Red River Resistance, stands with his family. ca. 1880s. Glenbow Archives: NA-2631-7.

Many Métis, including Gabriel Dumont, wanted Riel to take on the army. [84] However, it was never Riel's intention to start a war, and he decided that he could manage the peaceful handover of Manitoba to the Canadian government. [85] Riel was warned at the last minute that the army had intentions to imprison him and he was not going to be granted amnesty as promised. At the arrival of John A. Macdonald's army, Louis Riel fled from Fort Garry to the United States where he would be safe.

The Government of Canada had no intention of honouring their promises to the Métis in Red River, nor across the Homeland. [86] Métis families who stayed in the Red River area endured discrimination and racism from the Canadian soldiers and settlers there. The influx of immigrating Euro-Canadians pushed the Métis out of their businesses and their homes. The federal government bought resources for their supplies only from Euro-Canadian businesses, which impacted the services Métis were already providing in the area. [87] Despite the protests of Métis living there, the surveying that was initially stopped by Métis began again as first planned, resulting in many Métis having their land taken by the settlers. [88] In a very short time, the Government of Canada had usurped the Métis, who had been promised local authority, and many Métis were forced out of Red River, moving to join their families throughout the Homeland.

> Métis tried to avoid violence, while they looked to the province and the federal government to protect their rights. Carry on as usual, avoid the RREF where possible, and if not possible, arm yourselves and give the soldiers pause to think about what would happen if they attacked you. Above all, if you had to go to the Fort, go in large, well-armed numbers. Mostly, the Metis avoided Winnipeg and waited for a better day.
>
> –Shore, *Threads in the Sash*, 77.

> "Consequently, any of Riel's followers were very unpopular after [the Red River Resistance] in Manitoba, particularly when the country began to fill up with white people. At that time a lot of the half-breeds or Metis in Manitoba wouldn't have helped the economic pressure, in many cases even the physical pressure that was put upon them to remove them. So he [Larone Garneau, Jim Brady's maternal Grandfather] abandoned his holding in Manitoba and he migrated further west. There was a large exodus from the Red River settlement at that time of the Metis towards the west. He [Larone Garneau] was in that wave of migration."

–"James (Jim) Brady Informant's Address," James (Jim) Brady, interview by Art Davis, 1960. Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, Gabriel Dumont Institute.

Métis Homeland Heroes: Louis Riel

Figure 35. Manitoba Heritage Council Commemorative Plaques. https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/hrb/plaques/plaq0990.html.

Louis Riel was born on October 22, 1844 in St. Boniface in the Red River Settlement. He was the eldest son of Jean-Louis Riel (also known as "Louis Riel Sr.") and Julie Lagimodière (say: lah-jee-moh-dee-yayr). As a young boy, Riel excelled academically, so he left Red River at age 13 to attend school in Montreal. [89] After being away in Quebec and the United States, he returned to Red River on July 26, 1868. [90]

Upon his return home in 1868, Riel quickly became involved in the political movement of the Red River Métis, who were voicing their concerns over the proposed land transfer from the HBC to the Dominion of Canada. [91] Riel, the son of a well-respected Métis leader, was viewed by the Métis as young, articulate, well-educated, and selfless. Because of these traits, he emerged as the one man who could organize and lead the resistance of the Métis Nation. [92] To protect their social, cultural, and political rights, the Red River Métis established a provisional government, with Louis Riel as their leader. [93] Riel is often considered by both Métis and non-Métis to be the founder of Manitoba. [94] He was also elected to the House of Commons by Métis and non-Métis as a federal representative once in 1873 and twice in 1874. He was never able to take his seat due to the warrant for his arrest. [95]

Following the Red River Resistance, he fled to Montana, while the Métis in Canada continued to assert their rights and freedoms against the Canadian government. During his time in Montana, he married a Métis woman, Marguerite Monet dit Bellehumeur (say: Belle-her-mayr). Unfortunately, all three of his children died before having children of their own, so Louis Riel has no direct descendants. Upon the request of Gabriel Dumont and the Métis, Riel returned to the Métis Homeland in 1884. The events of the North-West Resistance quickly began to unravel following the return of Riel and his family to Canada. With his experience and success, Riel was the leader the Métis Nation needed. [96]

Despite Riel's efforts to keep things peaceful throughout the resistance efforts, the Métis had anticipated that they would need to take up arms against the Government of Canada. [97] Riel, leading the Métis provisional government, led the Métis Nation in partnership with Gabriel Dumont in resistance against the Canadian control. When the Métis were overwhelmed during the Battle of Batoche, Riel surrendered himself to save the lives of those who had fought with him. [98]

> "I am glad that the Crown have proved that I am the leader of the Half-breeds in the North-West. I will perhaps be one day acknowledged as more than a leader of the Half-breeds, and if I am, I will have an opportunity of being acknowledged as a leader of good in this great country."

–Riel, *The Queen vs. Louis Riel*.

Following his surrender, Louis Riel was tried for high **treason**. [99] During the proceedings, Riel and his legal counsel were repeatedly at odds with one another. [100] His lawyers chose the strategy of claiming Riel was insane and therefore not responsible for his actions. Riel did not want to use this strategy out of fear that it would invalidate the concerns and grievances of the Métis with the Canadian government. [101] Instead, he wanted to defend himself on the merits of the Métis cause. [102] The jury found Louis Riel guilty. [103] They recommended **clemency**, but the judge sentenced Louis Riel to death. [104] On November 16, 1885, Louis Riel was hanged in Regina. [105]

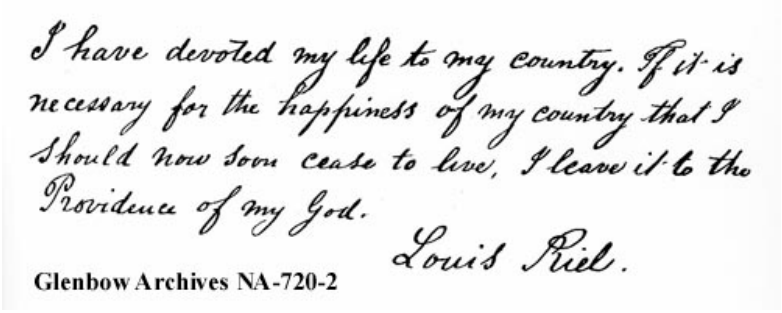


Figure 36. Louis Riel, statement. Glenbow Archives: NA-720-2.

> "I am more convinced every day that without a single exception I did right. And I have always believed that, as I have acted honestly, the time will come when the people of Canada will see and acknowledge it."

–Louis Riel, 1885, Manitoba Métis Federation, http://www.mmf.mb.ca/louis_riel_quotes.php.

A Few of Louis Riel's Major Achievements

1869 – Led the Provisional Government of the Métis in Red River, who authorized governance over the area

1870 – Presented the List of Rights defining conditions for Manitoba' s entrance to Canadian Confederation

1873, 1874 – Elected as federal representative three times and was denied his seat

1884 – Presented the Revolutionary Bill of Rights outlining the expectations of Métis for Euro-Canadians as they entered western Métis Homeland and imposed control

1885 – In partnership with Gabriel Dumont and other Métis leaders, led Métis in the North-West Resistance

1885 – Gave up his life for the Métis Nation and its rights

Figure 37. Louis Riel, 1884. Glenbow Archives: NA-2631-2.

The North-West Resistance

Métis families across the Homeland had been resisting **colonialism** for decades at this point. In every generation, their value for resilience was bolstered through their economic, political, and social connections. The Red River Resistance had impacts on all areas of Métis life across the Homeland. Some of the Métis communities already established, such as Ile-a-la-Crosse (say: eye-lah-cross) in Saskatchewan and St. Albert in Alberta, began to experience new degrees of racism and displacement. Métis had been active contributors to many communities for generations throughout their Homeland. As tensions rose between the Métis and the Euro-Canadian government and settlers, Métis' experiences of racism and displacement instigated by their neighbours increased.

> The aim of Canadian control in Red River into the 1870s and 1880s was reported as "to drive out by threats or actual violence all the French half-breed population."

–*Daily Pioneer*, Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA, October 6, 1870, cited in Shore, *Threads in the Sash*, 89.

Figure 38. Métis family near Batoche. https://corridorcanada.ca/resource/batoche-point-tournant-dans-lhistoire-des-metis/.

Many Métis, especially those in the area that became Winnipeg, were disempowered through racist policies. Others lost their homes and moved to other areas of the Homeland, such as St. Laurent, Qu'Appelle, and Prince Albert. The South Saskatchewan River, around Duck Lake and St. Laurent, was home to over 1,500 Métis by 1883. [106]

Figure 39. Métis camp on the Elbow of North Saskatchewan River, 1871. Charles Horetzky, Topley Studio. Library and Archives Canada: e011156806.

"Around the same time we also saw that the Métis of Edmonton were being pushed off their land by new settlers. When they reported this to the police they were told that nothing could be done. The Métis were the first to live there, and claimed squatter's rights. There were about thirty Métis families who had been forced out, and they decided to get justice for themselves. They accused the government of ignoring their rights to the land, which had been signed over to these new occupants, whom the government represented."

–Gabriel Dumont, in Barnholden, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks*, 61.

By this time, Métis saw an influx of Euro-Canadians settling in their Homeland. Many were increasingly frustrated, including a large gathering of Métis who were living along the South Saskatchewan River. They began issuing a series of petitions demanding that the Government of Canada acknowledge their rights to the lands as the Métis Nation. Tensions were only magnified when the Government of Canada took up treaty-making processes with First Nations while simultaneously ignoring the Métis petitions. Métis sent eighty-four petitions between 1878 and 1885. All were ignored by the Canadian government. The resilient values of the Métis fuelled their desire to defend and keep their lands.

"Around 1880 or 1881, the Métis of Batoche and St. Laurent got very tired of having to pay for the wood they cut for planks and firewood. I led the discontent. I could not understand why this was happening, since it was still wild country. In Manitoba, four or five years after it became a province, we could still cut wood on unoccupied land for free."

–Gabriel Dumont, in Barnholden, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks,* 59.

The success of the Métis under Louis Riel's leadership in the 1870 Red River Resistance inspired Gabriel Dumont and several other Métis to contact Riel in their time of need. In 1884, the Métis asked Riel to return to Canada and advise the Métis on their rights and freedoms. Despite Riel's reservations and negative standing with the Canadian Government, he agreed. Once he returned to Canada, Riel proposed that the Métis should continue to petition the Canadian government and persuade them to acknowledge the rights and freedoms that were promised to them.

With the help of Riel, the Métis created the ***Revolutionary Bill of Rights*** on March 8, 1885. The goal of the bill was to get the Government of Canada to recognize the right of Métis to their possessions and lands. Although the contents of the *Bill of Rights* are known, the location of the original document remains a mystery. It has been reported lost since March 1885, when Sir John A. Macdonald declared in the Dominion Parliament that no Northwest *Bill of Rights* had ever been "officially, or indeed in any way, **promulgated** [b] so far as we know and transmitted to the Government." [107]

"We did not want to have to fight for our rights, which had been won in the rebellion of 1870. But we were resolved to demand our rights from the government."

–Gabriel Dumont, in Barnholden, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks*, 61.

"A feeling of aggression that we were being denied our rights was felt and the crowd got beyond of Riel and the older and steadier heads and a muster was held, which was about three hundred strong, the total number of guns, a greater part of which were shot guns and many muzzle loading, was sixty."

–Patrice Fleury, quoted in Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother*, 335.

[b] "Promulgate" means to promote or make widely known.

Revolutionary Bill of Rights - March 8, 1885

1. That the half-breeds of the Northwest Territories be given grants similar to those accorded to the half-breeds of Manitoba by the Act of 1870.

2. That patents be issued to all half-breed and white settlers who have fairly earned the right of possession of their farms.

3. That provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan be forthwith organized with legislatures of their own, so that the people may be no longer subjected to the despotism of Mr. Dewdney.

4. That in these new provincial legislatures, while representation according to population shall be the supreme principle, the Métis shall have a fair and reasonable share of representation.

5. That the offices of trust throughout these provinces be given to the residents of the country, as far as practicable, and that we denounce the appointment of disreputable outsiders and repudiate their authority.

6. That this region be administered for the benefit of the actual settler, and not for the advantage of the alien speculator.

7. That better provision be made for the Indians, the parliamentary grant to be increased and lands set apart as an endowment for the establishment of hospitals and schools for the use of whites, half-breeds, and Indians, at such places as the provincial legislatures may determine.

8. That all lawful customs and usages which obtain among the Métis be respected.

9. That the Land Department of the Dominion Government be administered as far as practicable from Winnipeg, so that the settlers may not be compelled as heretofore to go to Ottawa for the settlement of questions in dispute between them and the land commissioner.

10. That the timber regulations be made more liberal, and that the settlers be treated as having rights in this country.

Figure 40. This is a transcription of what is written in the Revolutionary Bill of Rights. https://historyofrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/documents/FLQ_appendixu.pdf. An image of the original copy is not available at this time.

North-West Resistance Battles

News of the Government of Canada's response to the Métis' *Revolutionary Bill of Rights* came ten days later, when the Métis heard that armed Canadian police were coming to Batoche. [108] That day, they formed the **Exovedate** (say: ex-o-ve-dãt) and the second provisional government. Métis, passionate about the future of their Nation, had already resolved by creating the *Revolutionary Bill of Rights* to take up arms to protect the rights of their people. Gabriel Dumont and the Métis themselves voted to take up arms, despite Riel's aversion to violence.

> "'So I ask again, how many will take up arms? All in favor of taking up arms, raise your hands.' Instead of raising their hands, the whole stood up as one. There were cries of joy and they yelled, 'If we are to die for our country, we will die together.'"
>
> –Gabriel Dumont, in Barnholden, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks*, 66.

North-West Resistance Timeline

1879 –1885	Métis throughout the North-West send 84 petitions to the Dominion of Canada to have their land claims recognized
1883	Métis in St. Laurent are made the promise by the Canadian government, which was subsequently ignored, that their lands would be surveyed for their land claims
May 6, 1884	St. Laurent Métis contact Louis Riel for his assistance
June 4, 1884	Gabriel Dumont and other Métis meet with Louis Riel to request help
June 10, 1884	Louis Riel leaves for Canada with Gabriel Dumont and the other men
March 8, 1885	Métis issue the Revolutionary Bill of Rights
March 19, 1885	Métis form their Provisional Government
March 25–26, 1885	Métis Victory in the Battle of Duck Lake
April 24, 1885	Métis Victory in the Battle of Fish Creek (also known as 'Tourond's Coulee')
May 9–12, 1885	Métis defeat at the Battle of Batoche

Figure 41. Photo accessed from Google Maps.

Exovedate and Councillors of the Métis Provisional Government in Saskatchewan

The Exovedate and Councillors of the Métis provisional government were called together on March 21, 1885.

Exovedate is a Latin term coined by Louis Riel for the provisional government, with the title of his leadership in the council being ***Exovede,*** meaning "out of the flock." [109]

"Pierre Parenteau Sr. – President
Gabriel Dumont – Adjutant-General
Charles Nolin – Commissioner
Phillipe Garnot – Secretary
Eugene C. Boucher – Assistant Secretary"

–The Council of the Provisional Government. Lawrence Barkwell, *Veterans and Families of the 1885 Northwest Resistance* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2010), 30.

Battle of Duck Lake

Shortly after the Métis decided to protect their Nation through arms, Dumont led thirty Métis to the local store in Duck Lake to stock up on guns and ammunition on March 26, 1885. They intercepted three Canadian police along the way and moved to arrest them. Dumont was able to capture one, but the other two escaped. Métis quickly set up an ambush, which surprised and overwhelmed the 100 police that returned later with a cannon. The Canadian police were forced to retreat, but not without a close shot fired at Dumont. In this short battle, the Métis showed that their fierce pride and military strategy should not be underestimated. The police did not attack until a month later, at the Battle of Fish Creek.

Many Métis remember that, during the Battle of Duck Lake, "Riel and Maxime Lépine fought armed only with crucifixes. Both men rode fearlessly, taking fire throughout. Neither was hit and both spent the battle encouraging the fighters. They seemed invincible, and the Métis believed that the spirit of God kept these holy men from being shot. Those fighting with guns took courage from Riel and Lépine."

–Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother*, 339.

Battle of Fish Creek (also called Battle of Tourond's Coulee)

On April 24, 1885 the Resistance efforts began again. General Frederick Middleton had arrived with volunteer troops and militia to lead the charge against the Métis forces. The night before, Métis received word that the Canadian troops were preparing to attack Batoche. As a quick response, Dumont sent fifty soldiers with Riel to Batoche, while he established an ambush of 200 Métis at Fish Creek, also called "Tourond's Coulee" (say: too-rons coo-lee). Unfortunately, they lost the advantage of surprise when their ambush was discovered by the Canadian soldiers.

At Tourond's Coulee, with the enemy closing in, the men found courage in the songs of the Métis bard Pierre Falcon . . . they sang their Métis Nation songs, shouted with joy and threw their coats and blankets in the air. Elie Dumont remembered it years later and how, at the time, he thought it was a beautiful sight.

–Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother*, 342.

Despite the early discovery, Métis were able to hold the line for some time. Back at Batoche, Louis Riel was praying for the success of the Métis. Marguerite Caron (née Dumas), a revered Métis woman in Batoche, insisted that Riel not only pray but send the Métis soldiers waiting at Batoche to support their kin at Fish Creek. He resisted, as he wished to maintain **diplomacy** but finally sent them.

> The story goes that Louis Riel, the head of the provisional government and the leader of the rebellion, was on his knees in the village church when Marguerite burst in on him, roused him from his religious stupor, demanding that he send reinforcements to the coulee. . . .She railed, "If you don't send reinforcements, I'll go myself."

–Dana Robbins, "Discovering My Mother's Secret and My Métis Family's Heroism," adapted article from speech, *Toronto Star*, Saturday November 11, 2017. https://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2017/11/11/discovering-my-mothers-secret-and-my-mtis-familys-heroism.html.

Marguerite's insistence was critical to the victory of the Métis in the Battle of Fish Creek. Edouard Dumont's troop of eighty arriving from Batoche forced Middleton's soldiers to withdraw and retreat once again.

Who is Telling the Story? Métis Women in the Resistance

Métis women were essential to the strategies, victories, and recoveries of the Nation's Resistance efforts. There are many stories known by Métis around the Homeland about the contributions of their grandmothers, mothers, and aunties. Marguerite (Dumas) Caron's insistence on the sending of troops to the Battle of Fish Creek during the North-West Resistance gave rise to a Métis victory. Other Métis women cared for the non-combatant community in a variety of ways, such as maintaining a home base for the Métis, dressing wounds, and hiding the people from warfare. Another story remembers Eleanor Garneau, wife and mother of a Métis family in Edmonton, who destroyed a letter from Riel for her husband when Canadian soldiers searched their home for incriminating evidence by scrubbing it inconspicuously in her laundry bin.

> It is important to look at Metis' own accounts and testimonies relating to the North-West resistance in 1885 to understand the views and activities of women at Batoche during that important event. Some women, such as Madeleine Wilkie (wife of Gabriel Dumont) and Marguerite Monet (wife of Louis Riel) emerge in these accounts as "helpmates," while others, such as Marguerite (Dumas) Caron and Josephte (Paul) Tourond, were critical to Metis strategy.

–Diane Payment, "Structural and Settlement History of Batoche Village," Manuscript Report Series, Parks Canada (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs, 1977), 20.

Most historical accounts of these battles do not acknowledge the way Métis families collectively resisted the colonial efforts of Canada. Métis women were and continue to be fiercely proud of their Métis heritage, alongside their fathers, grandfathers, husbands, brothers, sons, and friends. The contributions they have made to the Métis Nation are honoured in Métis accounts of history. It is important that their stories be celebrated by educators when sharing about Métis history.

Battle of Batoche

The final confrontation of the North-West Resistance began one month after the Métis success in the Battle of Fish Creek. In early May, Métis dug rifle pits in the slopes of trails on the route to Batoche. Meanwhile, General Middleton had ordered two Gatling guns to reinforce their attack. One gun was mounted on the *SS Northcote,* a Canadian steamship travelling down the South Saskatchewan River. The other was set up by the troops on land.

The Battle of Batoche began on May 9, when the *SS Northcote* entered Batoche and troops began firing on unarmed Métis. No one was hurt, as they moved beyond its range. Xavier Letendre, operator of the ferry in Batoche, lowered the ferry cable to slice the *Northcote*'s smokestacks off as it passed by it. The ship floated aimlessly downstream and was beached; the troops onboard became prisoners of the Métis.

Figure 42. The *SS Northcote* with broken smokestacks, 1885. Glenbow Archives: NA-363-51.

From May 9 to 12, Métis fought the Canadian troops with prayers and bullets. Riel earnestly prayed, encouraging other non-combatant Métis to pray, while Gabriel Dumont led the military efforts. He had organized the Métis troops in small units of ten with a captain, similarly to their Buffalo Hunt structure. The Battle of Batoche ended when the Métis ran out of ammunition on that third day.

> Although they were vastly outnumbered by Middleton's men, who had far superior weapons, the Metis held out for three days. However, they were now armed with little but their courage. Bone-weary and lacking ammunition, they were overrun.
>
> –Goulet, *The Métis: Memorable Events and Memorable Personalities*, 141–142.

> Victory was a simple matter of who had more ammunition, and that was not a battle the Métis could win. When their bullets ran out, the Battle of Batoche and La Guerre Nationale were over.

–Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother,* 349.

Figure 43. Louis Riel, standing outside the guard tent after his surrender, 1885. Glenbow Archives: NA-363-53.

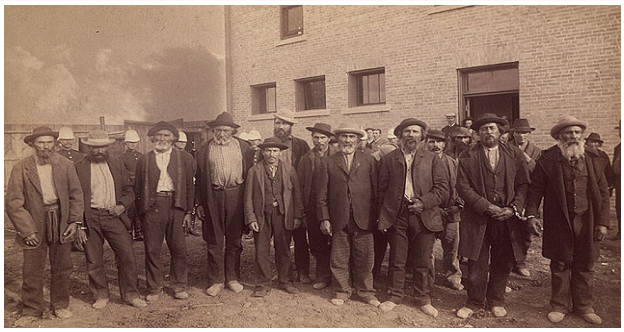


Figure 44. Group photograph of Métis and Native prisoners from the North West Rebellion, August 1885. Library and Archives Canada: 3228114. Title is from original source.

Following the Battle of Batoche, the North-West Resistance came to an end. Various stories and accounts outline the theft and destruction of Métis property by Middleton's soldiers in the days after the battle. [110] Many of the surviving participants, including Gabriel Dumont, fled to the US, with some joining the existing Métis communities in Montana and North Dakota. Louis Riel was said to have surrendered himself to the Canadian militia to spare as many Métis as possible and to ensure that the Métis would still be willing to fight for their rights. [111]

"People thought Riel surrendered in the end to save the lives of those who fought with him, that he had offered himself in their place. He thought they would be happy with his head . . . . Riel had also said before that 'if it turns bad and the leaders are saved, there will be many followers who are lost.'"

–Gabriel Dumont, in Barnholden, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks*, 24.

"I think the real story is how poorly our people were treated after the resistance. We just stood up to assert our rights to the land there—to protect our way of life there. And the Canadian army just turned its guns on us. We were burnt out, starved out, chased out. Our churches and our homes were robbed, burned and looted."

–Geordy McCaffrey, executive director of the Gabriel Dumont Institute in Saskatoon, interview with D. W. Langford, https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/the-enduring-mystery-of-the-bell-of-batoche/.

"Stoves, clocks, bedsteads, tables etc. were all mercilessly destroyed by these raving maniacs. The soldiers have robbed and destroyed everything they could lay their hands on in that region, leaving the residents in the most destitute conditions."

–A reporter in 1885 records his witness of the treatment of Métis following the end of the resistance. D. W. Langford, "One of the biggest mysteries in Métis history gets even more puzzling," *Maclean's*, June 21, 2017, https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/the-enduring-mystery-of-the-bell-of-batoche/.

Figure 45. A group of Métis women escaping the danger of the battle, 1885. Glenbow Archives: NA-363-70.

"When the Metis army was defeated, the settlement members were forced to flee, and were not able to take their personal items with them. Although General Middleton had promised the Metis security and protection, the members of the Canadian army pillaged the Metis farms and stole or slaughtered livestock, leaving community members destitute. Although twelve men died as a result of the battle, nine women died of causes linked to or aggravated by the suffering and deprivation of the war."

–Gladue Rights Research Database, "Summary, Event—Metis Community at Batoche," http://drc.usask.ca/projects/gladue/view_record.php?table=event&id=619&from=browse.

Bell of Batoche

The story of the bell of Batoche is one important example of Métis property destroyed and stolen following the end of the North-West Resistance. The Bell of Batoche is a story that describes the experiences of Métis in their relationship with Canada following the National Resistances. Following their defeat, the Métis Nation not only suffered many lives lost; they also had their homes and lands stolen and their community treasures pillaged. Read the history that is remembered by the Métis Nation below.

"The bell of Batoche was purchased in 1884 for the Saint Antoine de Padoue Roman Catholic Church at Batoche, Saskatchewan. As was the custom of the day, the bell was baptized and named Marie Antoinette. Her godparents were the sister and brother duo of Marie Letendre-Champagne and Xavier Letendre dit Batoche for whom the village was named. During the 1885 Resistance, when the Métis fought the Canadian government over land rights, the bell was stolen and taken to Millbrook, Ontario. There she was used as the fire hall bell and then later was put on display at the local Royal Canadian Legion Branch. In 1991, the bell was taken from Millbrook and its whereabouts were unconfirmed until July 2013 when it was repatriated to the Métis of Canada in a special ceremony at Back to Batoche. At that time, Billyjo DeLaRonde was acknowledged as the Keeper of the Bell."

Figure 46. Photo and quotation are both cited from an educational pamphlet released by Métis leaders following the repatriation ceremony during Back to Batoche Days, July 20, 2013. The ceremony was held in five of the languages traditionally spoken by Métis across the Homeland: English, French, Cree, Michif, and Anishinaabe.

"The time has come to bring hope to our Métis people; I want the Métis to touch and ring this bell and let its sound reverberate into their strong spirit, to give them strength and courage to keep on fighting for what they believe in."

–Billyjo DeLaRonde, as cited in the educational pamphlet released by Métis leaders following the repatriation ceremony during Back to Batoche Days, July 20, 2013.

"The Bell of Batoche, to me, is the connection to our past, and to our ancestors. As a Métis person, I heard about the Bell of Batoche all my life, so of course it matters. The Bell of Batoche was used as a community icon that called our people together for all sorts of reasons. And of course, it really matters that it was stolen from us all those years ago."

–Audrey Poitras, interview with D. W. Langford, https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/the-enduring-mystery-of-the-bell-of-batoche/.

Trial of Louis Riel

The trial addressing Canada's charges against Louis Riel began on July 20, 1885, and lasted four days. Riel addressed the court, outlining the undemocratic treatment of Métis on the prairies. In the end, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald had Riel charged with high treason, based on an outdated British law from 1342. [112] It carried the death penalty whereas the Dominion of Canada's treason law did not.

Figure 47. Riel on trial, 1885. Glenbow Archives: NA-1081-3.

The injustice of the trial has been a controversial and uncomfortable subject in Canadian history for over a century. The actions taken by Canada during the trial raised suspicions about whether justice had been served. Other resources provide a more in-depth review of Riel's trial. Amongst the most suspicious actions are the last-minute venue change; the select appointment of the judge and jury by John A Macdonald; the denial of time for the defence to prepare; and Riel's lawyers. [113] The jury found Riel guilty and recommended leniency. However, being the symbol of Métis resistance in the eyes of Canada, he was sentenced to hang. Despite the many protests in support of Riel, he was hanged in Regina on November 16, 1885.

> "The Métis Nation did not die with Riel on that day in 1885. The Nation had suffered a blow, but within two years the Métis were already gathering their forces and forming new organizations. Riel was dead, but his soul became the spark that kept the flame of the Métis Nation alive."

–Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother, 376.*

Who is Telling the Story? Rebellion or Resistance

For several generations, Métis defended their right to live in the North-West. As a Nation, the Métis had been withstanding Euro-Canadian attempts to control the people and lands of the North-West by 1816. In the eyes of Riel and the Métis, the Dominion of Canada was a foreign power imposing their laws on Métis lands; therefore, Métis resistance against them was not rebellious. [114] The many resistance movements that Métis took up were in defence of justice, fair play, and the rights to land. However, the Dominion of Canada, which was ruled by British Law, did not acknowledge the Métis Nation as having sovereignty nor Indigenous rights to land. Instead, Métis were viewed as subjects that Canada received with their claim to the land.

For over a hundred years, much of Canadian history has remembered the resistance of Métis as rebellious and traitorous. This has justified much of the racism, displacement, and dispossession that Métis have experienced across the North-West. As educators work to include Métis voices in their classrooms, it is essential that they address the language used in sharing stories, so students can develop an accurate and informed perspective about Métis and their relationship with Canada.

Who is Telling the Story? Louis Riel, Hero

Métis remember and celebrate Louis Riel as one of their principal political leaders, who fought and died for the rights of the Métis Nation. Learning the history of the Métis Nation is essential for understanding why Riel is cherished by the people as a hero.

One of the most common historical narratives about Louis Riel in Canada portrays him as a mentally ill person obsessed with his own power. This narrative has deep roots, beginning with the way Euro-Canadian settlers heard about his emergence as an elected Métis leader in 1869 and continuing throughout his life up to the 1885 trial that cost Riel his life. The Canadian lawyers representing Riel wanted to defend his actions by claiming him insane, which aligned with the orders of the Quebec men and priests that they reported to. [115] Riel objected to their defence strategy, continuing to assert and provide evidence of his sanity. Three Canadian physicians signed sworn affidavits attesting to his sanity, maintaining the validity of his actions on behalf of the Métis Nation.

While there is documentation that Riel did suffer from mental distress in his youth, this is not a reason to write off his leadership on behalf of the Métis Nation. [116] As a Nation, the people have not questioned the sanity of Riel and have refused to judge him based on the mental illness standards of others. [117] He endured his personal struggles, was supported by community, and became an indispensable political leader of the Métis Nation in the 1800s. Labelling Louis Riel "insane" merely serves the purposes of the Euro-Canadian settlers' ideas about their right to control the land.

> The "Métis Nation wants Riel to be judged for his actions only. By that they mean one simple fact: Riel fought for them and he died for them. . . . He died for the Métis Nation, for their rights, their lives, their lands, and their very existence."
>
> –Teillet, *The North-West is Our Mother,* 368.

Figure 48. Statue of Louis Riel outside the Manitoba Legislative Building. Manitoba Historical Society. http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/sites/rielstatue.shtml.

The misinformed narrative about Canada's history has been changing slowly over the past few decades. In 1992, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly passed a resolution to honour the role of Louis Riel in the founding of Manitoba. The Canadian Senate and House of Commons followed suit the same year, recognizing Louis Riel as a founder of Manitoba and honouring the contributions he made to Confederation. [118]

It is important that educators take time to recognize Métis perspectives in relation to the history of the Métis Nation and empower students to learn an authentic telling of it. Learning about Métis history with a renewed perspective ensures that educators do not continue sharing the single, misinformed narrative that reduces Riel to just a mentally ill rebel against Canada. Métis have, for generations, recognized and celebrated Riel as a leader. He envisioned a secure future in which the families of the Métis Nation lived free.

Building Communities and Enduring Dispossession

Métis across the Homeland found new ways to demonstrate resilience. Many Métis were subject to extreme **ostracization,** especially as they continued to have their claims to land and **Indigeneity** dismissed well into the 20th century. Canadian stereotypes led the belief that Métis were just "half-breed, traitorous Canadians." These harmful stereotypes embellished the claims of both the Government of Canada and Canadian settlers as they justified Métis dispossession. Being stereotyped, displaced, and dispossessed of their lands sparked a diversity of resilient responses from Métis. While some Métis were able to continue advocating for their community, most Métis had few options for protecting their families: hiding their cultural identity, joining First Nation or non-Indigenous communities wherever they would fit in based on their physical appearance, moving away from discrimination into historical gathering places, or **squatting** in uninhabited areas and **road allowances.** The Government of Canada attempted to assimilate Métis on a wider scale through systems such as the **Scrip System**, the **Residential** and **Industrial School Systems,** and **the Sixties Scoop**.

> Following the Battle of Batoche, it was Metis women, upheld as the transmitters and preservers of Metis culture, who would rebuild the community. Although they made applications to the Rebellion Losses Commission for financial compensation, patronage, and nepotism, as well as class prejudice, negatively influenced the final dispensation of funds. In many cases, women whose claims of loss or non-participation were denounced by others were dismissed–demonstrating gendered and racialized differentials of credibility and power accorded to different colonial actors. Many families found it difficult to financially recover.

–Gladue Rights Research Database, "Summary, Event—Metis Community at Batoche," http://drc.usask.ca/projects/gladue/view_record.php?table=event&id=619&from=browse.

Despite inconceivable racism, discrimination, dispossession, and displacement, their collective history remained foundational to the identity of Métis families. Many communities continued to celebrate their language, culture, and traditions in hiding. This shared experience during these dark times is explored in this document.

> Even after Canada's violent entrance into the Métis homeland, Métis communities existed openly, expanding, contracting, and germinating in new locations as the flows of colonial power pushed and pulled at them.

–Adam Gaudry, "Communing with the Dead: The "New Métis," Métis Identity Appropriation, and the Displacement of Living Métis Culture." *The American Indian Quarterly 42*, no. 2 (2018): 164.

The shared experiences of Métis across the Homeland are explored below in several brief sections: Moving Around the Homeland; Squatting and Road Allowance Experiences; Hiding in Plain Sight; and the **North-West Half Breed Commission**: Scrip System. The Residential and Industrial School Systems and the Sixties Scoop are further explored in the *Métis in Alberta* foundational knowledge theme. However, the intergenerational impact these have had on Métis families must also be acknowledged. These common experiences were a part of enduring Canadian colonization throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, before Métis began to regionally reassert themselves as collectives.

Moving around the Homeland

Figure 49. Trading post at Métis settlement, Touchwood Hills, Saskatchewan, 1890. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives: NA-5096-2.

Following the North-West Resistance, the Canadian government focused on settling the land with Euro-Canadian families, ignoring the Métis, who had been on these lands for generations. The events of 1885 narrowed the space Métis were acknowledged and allowed to occupy. This dismissal of Métis was foundational to the culture of dispossession that enabled Canadian colonialism. [119]

Mobility in the Métis Nation became a key strength as families and whole communities began to move to places around the Homeland that had been a part of their families for generations, especially during the buffalo hunts. [120] Métis families relied on their network of communities and kinship, joining friends and family across the Homeland. For some families, this meant squatting in uninhabited areas or setting up gathering places on land set aside as road allowances by the Government.

The community of Batoche was re-established by the late 1880s, prospered again briefly in the 1890s, and subsequently maintained a certain *modus vivendi* [way of life] well into the twentieth century. The resistance brought increased prejudice and isolation for the Metis, but they persisted in their demands for resurveys of their lands, political representation in the territorial and federal governments, and favourable economic policies. Most of the original families remained in the district, and many refugees returned. But the Delorme, Desmarais, and Gervais families relocated to the Pincher Creek area in the 1880s, and the Goulet, Belanger, and Arcand families were living in the Battleford area by the late 1890s.

"Modus vivendi" is a Latin term meaning "way of life."
–Diane Payment, Gladue Rights Research Database, "Summary, Event—Metis Community at Batoche,"
http://drc.usask.ca/projects/gladue/view_record.php?table=event&id=619&from=browse.

Figure 50. William Wagner, pictured here on February 12, 1904, was a Métis man known for his connections in both Alberta and Montana. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives: NA-258-3.

Squatting & Road Allowance Experiences

While some Métis were able to join their communities in other historical locations, some families and communities were forced onto open, unoccupied lands. When Métis were pushed out of their homes, they often built living spaces for themselves on unoccupied land or in areas set aside for future road construction. The stories of Métis being "Road Allowance People" are painful, common memories for families across the Homeland, as many endured dispossession at the hands of Euro-Canadian settlers and governments.

Many Metis did not find a place. They were forced to live on road allowances or to trek to the edge of the bushland, avoiding, temporarily, the inexorable push of settlement.

–Murray Dobbin, "The One-and-a-Half Men: The Story of Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris, Metis Patriots of the Twentieth Century" (Vancouver:

The Government of Canada's reluctance to recognize Métis corporate rights and the increasing social and economic marginalization of these communities forced many of their communities further west, dispersing families throughout the Homeland. By the 1950s, twenty-six squatting communities were documented in Manitoba, and many undocumented communities existed throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan. [121]

The experiences of squatting and living on road allowance lands are examined in detail in the *Métis in Alberta* theme. It is important to understand that Métis often could not stay in their generational homes and were pushed out onto the fringes of the communities they had helped establish.

> Conditions for the Métis during this time were less than favorable; economic tensions and racial biases compounded to produce increasing levels of poverty and prejudice. The Métis relied heavily on seasonal work due to social inequality and forbidden access to education. In addition, low incomes due to lack of more favorable employment opportunities meant that there was shortage of available funds to properly maintain let alone to make improvements on their homes.

–"Road Allowance Communities and Other Post-1885 Housing Challenges," *The Métis Architect* (blog), August 9, 2017, https://metisarchitect.com/2017/08/09/road-allowance-communities/.

North-West Half-Breed Commission: The Scrip System

The system that justified Canada's sense of responsibility to acknowledge the land claims of Métis around the Homeland was set up by their North-West Half-Breed Commission: this was the Scrip System. This system was viewed as a means of removing any claims to land Métis people might have had. Métis were given a coupon that was evidence of entitlement to receive either land or money.

> "Canada, for its part, had what it wanted: uninterrupted room to carry out the 'Purposes of the Dominion,' [which was:] the settlement of the West, the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the establishment of a country 'from sea to sea.'"

–Shore, "Threads in the Sash," 106.

A Métis person with a scrip coupon for land would be given access to either 160 or 240 acres of land, often far from their home. Money scrip could amount to $160 or $240, which was to be used to purchase land for homesteading. The system was poorly established and was easily manipulated and exploited by settlers.

Scrip was meant to pacify the dispossessed Métis. [122] It was a legal process of dispossession and of the surrender of Métis individuals' recognition as being part of a collective Indigenous Nation. [123]

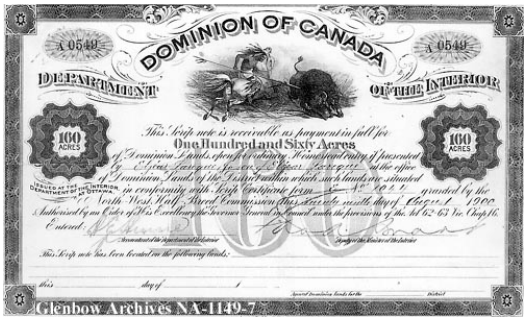


Figure 51. A Scrip coupon for 160 acres issued to Elziar Laroque on August 29, 1900. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-1149-7.

> Where studies have been done, between 90–98% of these coupons, end up in the hands of white land speculators. The Métis don't get the land, they are dispossessed.

– Zachary Davis, "Métis Scrip: A Claim against the Crown," interview with Global News (00:49–1:25), https://globalnews.ca/video/4943795/metis-scrip-a-claim-against-the-crown.

Hiding in Plain Sight

"Hiding in plain sight" is a phrase used to describe the status of Métis across the Homeland following the 1885 Resistance efforts and into the 1960s. Following the 1885 Resistance, it became unwise, and sometimes dangerous, to publicly self-identify as Métis. [124] This concept of hiding in plain sight coexists with the idea that, following the Resistance efforts, Métis were intentionally pushed to the margins of society. Because of this, resilience in this era often took the form of hiding. Many families began to hide their heritage from others, even their children, to save themselves from ostracization and racism.

"The atmosphere in Winnipeg after 1870 has been called a "reign of terror" which was designed to discourage public identification as Métis. This disinclination to publicly identify as Métis only increased following the events of 1885. Many Métis grew ashamed to identify in public. In this way, the Métis survived like other beings in nature, by being invisible."

–Jean Teillet, *Métis Law in Canada* (Vancouver: Pape Salter Teillet, 1999), 1–9.

The Métis have always known themselves to be an independent people; however, they have not always been recognized as such. The term "half-breed" appeared as a Census category in 1886 but was removed by 1906. Instead, Métis were variously classified as "**Indian,**" "white," or "other." [125] This left no room for self-identification.

"In my childhood, I often stayed with my grandparents on the old scrip farm of Maxime Lepine at Batoche. I did not realize at the time that I was tramping in the footsteps of a noble guerrilla warrior. Maxime's spirit was not there, not felt at all. Of the many games we halfbreed kids invented, not one was related to the struggle of 1885. This history was hidden from us because our grandparents and parents were defeated generations. We were a new generation, starting our lives of defeat, without hope, ashamed of ourselves as halfbreeds. Although our forefathers–Regnier, Boucher, Fiddler, McDougall, Parenteau, Ouellette, Short, Adams–had fought gloriously against the Ottawa regime, we were still the wretched of the earth."

–Howard Adams, "Prison of Grass: Canada from the Native Point of View," in *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism*, ed. John Weinstein (Calgary: Fifth House Publishers, 2007).

Some Métis took the opportunity to sign onto Treaty, becoming legal "Indians," and accepted government provisions to feed their families. One example of this is the Rainy River/Lake of the Woods Métis community in Ontario, who signed the **Half-Breed Adhesion to Treaty 3** and received the same benefits as First Nations who had signed it.

Others simply denied their Métis background, identifying only with other ethnicities, such as French or Scottish. [126]

There was little advantage to claiming Métis heritage and much to be lost—housing, jobs, and even love.

–Teillet, "The North-West is Our Mother," 432.

Métis were doing what they had to do during this time to survive. For most Métis, though, this was not an option. Many families continued to be pushed further to the outskirts of their Homeland and further from their identity.

A growing number of people self-identify as Métis without any connection to the Métis Nation or the Métis Homeland. The logic is founded on the idea that Métis just means "mixed-race," and, because

they discovered "an Indigenous **ancestor** born 300 to 375 years ago through genealogy," they claim a mixed-race Indigenous identity. [127] This form of **race-shifting** dismisses the Métis Nation's collective history and the many generations that hid their Métis identity to protect their families from racism and discrimination.

Who is Telling the Story? The Forgotten People

Métis people have always known who they are despite the fact that their history has largely been written by non-Indigenous authors, which has led to the description of Métis as "the **forgotten people**." [128] The Métis have often been described as "hiding" as a means of survival following the 1870 and 1885 Resistance efforts. [129] The narrative of Métis being "the forgotten people" demonstrates the larger issue of colonial racism and erasure. Métis were intentionally pushed to the margins of society through colonial categorizations of race in law. Their identity appeared to be "hidden" because of prejudice, ignorance, and politics. [130] Métis were never "forgotten" but, rather, were overlooked by racist and colonial exclusionary policies and movements that overwrite the Métis narrative.

Resistance and resilience against **colonialism** have always played a large role in the Métis narrative that continued after the 1885 Resistance efforts. The oldest Métis cultural institution is the *Union Nationale Métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba* (say: Union Nah-shun-all Meh-tiss Saynt-Joe-seph doo Manitoba). It was founded on July 17, 1887, in St. Vital, Manitoba. Still in existence today, it continues the efforts of the resistance movements to fight for their independence. The *Union Nationale Métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba* has taken on many tasks, such as countering the anti-Métis bias in many Canadian history books and creating resources from a Métis perspective.

> Métis communities existed openly even as their members faced the economic, political, and social forces that sought to marginalize them.
>
> –Michel Hogue, "Still Hiding in Plain Sight? Historiography and Métis Archival Memory," 2.

The St. Albert Mounted Rifles militia was created during the 1885 Resistance by a group of Métis residents in the St. Albert, Alberta, region to prevent attacks on their land and homes. [131] On May 26, this group of volunteers became officially known as part of the Active Service of the Militia of Canada. [132] Following their recognition, the Mounted Rifles marched to Lac La Biche on June 7 in response to reports that Hudson's Bay Company stores were being looted and news of a potential conflict in the area. [133] They also patrolled in the vicinity of Saddle Lake. The group was disbanded shortly after the 1885 Resistance. The St. Albert Mounted Rifles militia became a source of great pride and distinction to many Métis in the area. Members continue to be remembered as fostering a sense of local accomplishment and military tradition in St. Albert. [134]

The St. Albert Métis Association, or the Alberta Half-Breed Association, offers an important example of Métis maintaining self-governance following the North-West Resistance. It was founded in 1897 and operated until 1901. Métis in the area gathered to express concern over the way the Canadian government was handling Metis claims to land. They sent various petitions to the Government of Canada requesting scrip for children or recommending changes to scrip programs.

Métis continued to gather in their collectives around the Homeland, just as they did in St. Albert. Despite the lack of recognition by the federal and provincial governments throughout history, they have not forgotten who they are.

Distinct Histories around the Homeland

The collective history of the Métis Nation across all areas that became Canada has been developing since the late 1700s. The areas now referred to as "provinces" in Canada have recently imposed names given to them by Euro-Canadian settlers. Except in Manitoba, borderlines were imposed by the Canadian government across the Métis Homeland, enabling them to take control of resources and communities in various areas.

Manitoba has a unique history, as it was defined and named in a partnership between the Métis Nation and Canadian governments.

As Canadian governments developed the provinces, the Métis did not remain silent. While the Government of Canada recognized their **nation-to-nation** relationship with First Nations, they dismissed the Métis Nation, partly due to the way Métis resisted their colonial control in the Red River and North-West Resistance battles.

"One of the biggest challenges for the Métis, in relationship to our issues is that we've been a political football that's been tossed back and forth between the Federal and Provincial Governments."

– Melanie Omeniho, National President of the Women of the Métis Nation, cited by Brandi Morin, "Métis Have Always Been the Forgotten People: Court Grants Métis Long Awaited Recognition," *Spruce Grove Examiner*, January 15, 2013, https://www.sprucegroveexaminer.com/2013/01/15/metis-have-always-been-the-forgotten-people-court-grants-metis-long-awaited-recognition/wcm/2e5ff447-a9df-f98c-d392-28911cfa1033.

Nevertheless, Métis resilience remained strong. Despite their initial dismissal from federal political powers, Métis lobbied provincial governments to acknowledge the presence and needs of the Nation. Issues mentioned above, such as living on road allowances and the social and economic barriers to safe education, were legislated provincially.

As a result, throughout the 20th century, Métis formed governance structures, organizations, and services provincially. The review of this era of Métis Homeland history is therefore organized to reflect the developments of the Métis Nation across each province. Important historical locations, unique community experiences, and distinctions in political relationships involving the Métis Nation are shared below. The goal of this document is to equip educators with a foundational knowledge about Métis Homeland history. This document discusses several communities in order to briefly describe both the diverse and collective experiences of Métis across the Homeland. This is only an introduction, and educators are encouraged to further explore the many Métis communities that continue to exist across the Homeland.

Each Métis community, despite a commonly held culture and life experiences similar to other Métis communities, has a unique history, and slightly different cultural practices.

–Lawrence Barkwell, Leah Dorion, Darren Préfontaine, "Metis Homeland: Its Settlements and Communities" (Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute, 2017), 4.

The Métis survived during these trying times on road allowances, and crown land, with their own customary laws and social mechanisms. They remembered happier times, when they were an economic, social, and political force in Red River. They also never forgot about what happened to them after 1870.

– Shore, "Threads in the Sash," 115.

Métis within the Province of Manitoba

When the province of Manitoba was first brought into Confederation through the determination of the Métis in 1870, it was often referred to as a "postage stamp" province. As western settlement increased, so did the provincial boundaries, and, in 1912, the province was expanded to its current boundaries. The lands that were incorporated into Manitoba in 1912 had been occupied by Métis families and communities for generations. Communities such as Barrows, Cedar Lake, Thompson, Thicket Portage, and many more have had a Métis presence as early as the 1770s. The stories that have been chosen for this section are not the only ones about Métis in Manitoba. They offer a mere glimpse into the diversity and history of Métis in the province.

Though the *Union Nationale Métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba*) was founded on July 17, 1887, in St. Vital, Manitoba, its origins can be traced back to September 24, 1884 in Batoche, when Gabriel Dumont, Louis Riel, and other Métis patriots of the time founded the Association Saint-Joseph (the name of the patron having been chosen by Louis Riel himself) at Saint-Antoine-de-Padoue Church after Sunday Mass. [135] The *Union Nationale*'s goal is to strengthen the ties uniting the Métis Nation of Manitoba and support its vitality.

Rooster Town

Rooster Town was a Métis **road allowance community** in the southwest corner of Winnipeg that existed from 1901 to 1961. Métis began to settle in the area in the 1880s, but it was not until 1901 that Rooster Town became a community. The continued presence of Métis in the city and the formation and growth of Rooster Town demonstrated the continued strength of Métis resilience following the Resistance efforts and continuous Euro-Canadian settlement, among other struggles. Métis utilized the urban economic environment to try to make a better life for themselves and their families. [136] The community grew to have 59 households, with an estimated population of more than 250 people in 1946. [137]

> "Through its history, Winnipeg has seldom been hospitable to aboriginal people, either those whose presence predated the city's incorporation in 1874 or those attracted afterwards by its opportunities. . . . Being Métis in the city through much of the 19th and 20th centuries meant being subject to racism and even violence."
>
> –David Burley, quoted in Randy Turner, "The Outsiders: The Story of Rooster Town," (2016).

> Métis households moved to the Rooster Town community as a group with social ties and as extended families.
>
> –Evelyn J. Peters, Adrian Werner, Matthew Stock, and Lawrence Barkwell, *Rooster Town: The History of an Urban Métis Community, 1901–1961* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 2018), 50.

Figure 52. Rooster Town photo accompanying Joan Cohen's article, "No Fuss, No Excitement, Squatters 'Just Moving,'" *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 8, 1959, https://roostertown.lib.umanitoba.ca/?page_id=319.

In the 1950s, the City of Winnipeg wanted to expand their suburbs, and Rooster Town residents experienced a series of intrusions into their lives and community by health, education and municipal authorities to an extent that they had never previously experienced. Rooster Town residents were consistently slandered in local media leading up to their eviction.

The stigmatization of Rooster Town residents as "squatters" portrayed the character and lifestyle of people in the community inaccurately and unfairly, while working to justify their removal. This portrayed **propagated** and contributed to harmful stereotypes of Métis people, and ultimately contributed to public support for the unjust displacement of Métis people from their homes. In 1959, the city offered the remaining families $75 to move by May and threatened to evict the rest. [138] Houses were bulldozed and burned, and the six-decade-old community was destroyed. By 1961, there was no physical evidence that Rooster Town had ever existed.

St. Laurent

Figure 53. Church and Convent, St. Laurent, 1919. Now owned by Manitoba Métis Federation. Archives of Manitoba, https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/hrb/plaques/plaq1150.html.

Many Métis were initially attracted to the St. Laurent area by the abundance of fish and the wooded land nearby, which provided game and wild fruit. This allowed Métis to continue to practice their culture and traditional ways of life.

Settlement in St. Laurent was first established by a group of Métis who had been forced from their land near Pembina when the Dakota Territory became part of the United States. [139] The community continued to be a place of refuge for displaced Métis. Many families came to the region in 1826 due to flooding in the Red River Valley, and the community expanded following the 1870 Resistance effort. [140] St. Laurent has remained almost exclusively Métis throughout its history and continues to maintain its Métis identity and Michif language. [141] Homes in St. Laurent reflect the river lot system, which provided households access to water for transportation and fishing, as well as land for cultivation. Métis in St. Laurent maintained a close relationship with the Métis in the Red River Settlement, and the river provided an easily accessible transportation system by which to travel to visit their kin across the Homeland.

The economy in St. Laurent consisted of salt making, fishing, hunting, gathering, trapping, and trading, which demonstrates the diversity of Métis in the Red River region. Although Red River is often thought of as the epicentre of Métis culture, it is important to recognize that communities across the Homeland existed both in close connection to and apart from Red River.

> "In their homes, their schools, and their recreational centers, these people are also playing the fiddle, learning traditional dances, and eating deer, duck, and even muskrat stew. They speak Michif, French, and English. They fish, they hunt, they raise horses, and they are proud to be Métis. This way of life—modern, yet rooted in culture and tradition—makes Saint-Laurent unique and so noteworthy."

–Daniel Fortier in "St. Laurent A Métis Community," teachers' guide (Government of Manitoba, 2006).

Restoring the Métis Nation: Manitoba Métis Federation

Métis in Manitoba have a deep history of advocacy and political organization. Métis leaders worked alongside First Nations leaders in the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and in annual Indian and Métis conferences. Together with their kin, they advocated for and strategized ways to support people during their social and economic challenges. By the 1960s, however, it became clear that Métis interests would be best represented through a distinctly Métis organization.

Figure 54. Manitoba Métis Federation logo, https://www.manitobametis.com

In 1967, "rather than join in a planned Indian and Métis Conference taking place in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Reverend Adam Cuthand, Elizabeth Isbister, Ted Simard, Tom Eagle and Angus Spence met" to establish the Manitoba Métis Federation.[142] The Federation developed programs to support Métis education, housing, health, awareness, and economics. In addition to these strategic programs, the Manitoba Métis Federation today plays an instrumental role in furthering the Métis Nation's relationship with Canada and addressing historical injustices through the courts.

Métis within the Province of Saskatchewan

After the North-West Resistance, Métis had to continue living amidst the expanding Canadian state and increasing hostility towards them. Saskatchewan was granted provincial status in 1905, bringing Métis who had been living in these areas for generations under both federal and provincial legislation. Historically, the economy in the region had centred on the fur trade. After obtaining provincehood, the government pushed to transition to wheat farming, cattle ranching, and the extraction of fossil fuels. Métis living in the province have continued to adapt to the changing times.

> Métis communities "in what is now Saskatchewan predated the development of an agrarian society by over 100 years. In the later 18th and early 19th centuries, the Métis plied their various skills in the fur trade. After 1821 and the consolidation of the Canadian fur trade, and until the age of the railway, Métis traders criss-crossed what is now Saskatchewan in vast caravans of Red River carts."

–Darren R. Préfontaine, "Métis Communities," *Indigenous Saskatchewan Encyclopedia*, https://teaching.usask.ca/indigenoussk/import/metis_communities.php.

Métis across the province have made significant contributions to Saskatchewan's social, cultural, economic, and political fabric. There are many stories to be shared. Those highlighted below were chosen to provide educators with a glimpse into the distinct histories of Métis in this region.

Educators in Alberta should know that "in the province of Saskatchewan, Métis people are very passionate about our history, culture, and heritage. Throughout the province there are very distinct versions of what it is like to be Métis. Someone in Uranium City, SK which borders the North West Territories will have a different view than someone from Estevan, SK which borders the United States of America. Although each community has their differences, there is one thing that binds them, that's the pride for the Infinity Flag and the pride that each community has when they say, 'we are Métis'. It's those differences that make us a very unique province, we are different, yet we are the same. Another thing that we all take pride in and are very proud of is having the sacred grounds of Batoche in our province. The Battle of Batoche was the decisive battle of the North-West Resistance, which pitted the Canadian authorities against a force of Métis and First Nations people.

"Life today in Saskatchewan is also very different. Today citizens have opportunities and programs we never had before. Some of these include: the first-time home buyers' program, post-secondary education support, and child and family services. Some of these programs were never available to citizens in past years, today citizens are taking full advantage of the opportunities presented to them. It's these programs and services that make life different to Métis citizens in the beautiful province of Saskatchewan."

– Jason McKay, Director of Education Métis Nation–Saskatchewan, personal communication with RCTL, February 16, 2021.

Green Lake

In 1939, Saskatchewan's government and the Roman Catholic Church created a Métis farming colony in a northern Saskatchewan community called "Green Lake." Métis were subjected to a government program called the "Green Lake Metis Rehabilitation Program."

Figure 55. Green Lake School. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, R-A8550.

Green Lake was a settlement for Métis families who had land set aside in 1902 by the federal government. [143] Métis were forcibly removed from their southern road allowance communities and placed into a segregated northern community. The goal of the Green Lake Métis Rehabilitation Program was to assimilate the Métis into mainstream society. Families were promised bountiful land, jobs, and social assistance by government agents when they arrived in Green Lake. Despite this promise, the government treated Métis poorly, as documented in a 1949 incident in which many southern road allowance Métis were loaded into railway cars to settle them at Green Lake. The Métis onboard the train watched in horror as government authorities burned down their homes. [144]

> Like the Metis of Red River, the Metis of Green Lake faced restrictive criteria in the attempt to establish their claims. Unlike Red River, no second generation of settlers came to Green Lake to lay claim to the land. Green Lake remained a Metis settlement, though it did so without formal title.
>
> –John P. Thornton, "The National Policy, The Department Of The Interior And Original Settlers: Land Claims of the Métis, Green Lake, Saskatchewan 1909–1930," thesis, (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1997), 141.

Figure 56. Horses and wagons at Green Lake, Saskatchewan. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, S-B8872.

The government program of moving southern road allowance families to Green Lake continued into the mid-1950s. It became clear that the Green Lake Metis Rehabilitation Program was not working by the late 1950s. Southern Métis were moving to the cities to look for wage labour opportunities, while those living on the farms often relied on government relief programs. [145] Métis eventually abandoned the Métis farms, and the government moved towards integrating the southern Métis into the province's cities.

Cumberland House

Cumberland House is the oldest Métis community in Saskatchewan. [146] From its beginning in 1774, Cumberland House has been a quintessential Métis community. The area is along the major fur trade waterway routes and was home to an abundance of waterfowl, moose, beaver, muskrat, and fish. [147]

> "One thing about the Métis people you'll find is they really like to socialize . . . . It was a community effort—part of the Métis culture—to socialize and gather in groups. They told stories and played games when people gathered."
>
> –Louis Dorion reflecting on his life growing up in Cumberland House. Interview with Leah Dorion-Paquin, http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/db/06819.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Métis families residing at Cumberland House endured many challenges. Smallpox decimated the community in Cumberland House twice: once in the early 1780s and then in the late 1830s. Animal stocks dropped in the 1820s, so Métis had to adapt their skillsets to continue to survive in the area. Many Métis trappers became York Boat freighters and packers for the HBC. [148] Their adaptability and continued resilience demonstrate the strength of the Cumberland House Métis community. By the late 19th century, Métis families were predominant in the region. [149]

Figure 57. "Modern Version of Red River Cart," Cumberland House, 1949. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, R-B253.

Figure 58. Half-Breed Commission, Cumberland House, 1900. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, S-B9847.

Restoring the Métis Nation: Métis Nation–Saskatchewan

The Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S) originated in the 1930s and 1940s, with leaders such as Joe Ross, J. Z. LaRocque, and Fred DeLaronde, who organized Saskatchewan's Métis in local areas. In 1938, the Saskatchewan Métis Association was founded to represent Métis living in the province's north. The Saskatchewan Métis Society was also established about this time, representing Métis in southern and central Saskatchewan. These two organizations evolved into the Métis Society of Saskatchewan (MSS), which was founded in 1964. [150] Joe Amyotte, Malcolm Norris, and James Brady led the organization; together, they collectively represented the voices of Métis and **Non-Status Indians** across the province.

Métis and Non-Status Indians often worked in solidarity at the time because they were both Indigenous peoples whose Indigenous identity and rights were not properly recognized. This led to the founding in 1975 of the MN-S's predecessor, the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan (AMNSIS). In 1988, a divisive referendum dissolved AMNSIS, and a Métis-only political body, the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan (MN–S), was created in 1993. That same year, the MN-S adopted a constitution and declared themselves to be a self-governing body for the Métis people of Saskatchewan. The MN-S worked with the provincial government to establish *The Métis Act* in 2001 which reaffirmed the rights of the Métis and recognized their contributions to the development and prosperity of Canada. [151]

Figure 59. Métis Nation–Saskatchewan logo, https://metisnationsk.com.

Métis Homeland Heroes: Jim Sinclair

Jim Sinclair is one of the Métis Nation's celebrated heroes. He is remembered as one of the key leaders who ensured that Métis had strong representation in the province of Saskatchewan and inclusion in the Constitution of Canada (1982). He was known for speaking with passion and fearlessness in demanding justice from the Government of Canada.

"You can say a lot about a leader like Jim Sinclair. Chances are we'll never see another one like him. He had a commitment to our community and he took it to the national level and international level. But I think what's really important is that he was able to embrace his family and love them after all the time he, and they, were apart. He sacrificed a lot while he lobbied for Aboriginal rights."

–Teillet, "The North-West is Our Mother," 430.

Figure 60. Jim Sinclair holding an award, https://windspeaker.com/news/footprints/jim-sinclair-worked-to-put-metis-in-canadas-constitution.

Jim was born in a community living on road allowance lands in Saskatchewan. His family lived in a "slum shack, and when the authorities evicted his family from the shack, they moved to a tent city farther away from the town." [152] The area they moved to was often called the "nuisance grounds," which was a "Métis tent city in a garbage dump" that remained on the fringes of Regina. [153]

"Jim Sinclair also had a flair for staging events that grabbed attention. When CMHC [Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation] gave the Saskatchewan Métis Society a meagre $5000 for a housing program, Sinclair had the amount converted into nickels and dimes and carted in wheelbarrows into the CMHC offices in Regina. He dumped the huge pile of coins on the floor. The Metis, he told reporters, were fed up with nickel and dimes programs."

–Don Ross, interviewed by Dianne Meili, *Windspeaker.com*, 2013 (archives), https://windspeaker.com/news/footprints/jim-sinclair-worked-to-put-metis-in-canadas-constitution.

Métis within the Province of Alberta

The Métis Nation has two centuries of roots in the land that would become Alberta. Over 60 communities in the Alberta area have been home to Métis throughout their history. In the *Métis in Alberta* theme, 12 distinct community stories are shared in full detail, along with a review of the story of the **Metis Settlements**. *Homeland History* features two of these stories to provide a glimpse into the unique elements of Métis history in Alberta that connect it to the Nation's Homeland.

St. Paul des Métis

Figure 61. Jimmy McLean family in St. Paul des Métis, Alberta, ca. 1890–1910. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-4584-5.

St. Paul des Métis had been a place for Métis to gather and celebrate traditions long before the 1900s. It became known by Métis as "St. Paul's place," where they would gather for religious traditions with Father Lacombe. Seeing the dispossession Métis communities continued to face, the Oblate Missionary devised a plan called "A Philanthropic Plan to Redeem the Half-Breeds of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories." He asked the Government of Canada to grant the Catholic Church land set aside for Métis to live on, form an agricultural colony, and send their children to an industrial school. The Church was granted the land, and, for nearly two decades, the Métis maintained a thriving community in the protected area. Stories tell of Métis agricultural success, caring for hundreds of cattle, sawmills, and trading posts between 1895 and 1912. [154]

Despite the success of the Métis at St. Paul des Métis, the Government of Canada and the Catholic Church began to forcefully push the Métis out of the area in order to make space for Euro-Canadian settlement. The land was granted specifically to the Church, not the Métis community, and there was little the Métis could do to protect the lands they had settled. In 1909, Father Lacombe and the Catholic Church were granted their request that St. Paul des Métis be opened to non-Métis settlers. In the following years, many Métis left the area, as they faced the same racism and discrimination they had for generations.

Metis Settlements in Alberta

Alberta is the only province or territory with legislated land set aside for Métis to live on. Métis in Alberta endured dispossession of their lands for generations, and many families faced extreme poverty as a result. Métis families across the province were continually being forced to relocate.

When Métis heard that the Government of Canada was planning to transfer the control of Crown lands to the Province of Alberta, they knew it was only a matter of time before they would be forced from their homes again to make way for Euro-Canadian homesteaders. Métis in the area began meeting and established ***L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest,*** the precursor to the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA) to lobby the Government of Alberta. They petitioned the

government to acknowledge the presence of their communities and their experiences of dispossession taking place around the province.

In 1934, the Government of Alberta responded and established *The Royal Commission on the Condition of the Halfbreed Population of the Province of Alberta* (commonly known as the **Ewing Commission,** after the primary commissioner, Justice Alfred Freemen Ewing). The Ewing Commission investigated the situation facing Métis in Alberta and issued a report that was foundational to the ***Metis Population Betterment Act**, 1938.*

Figure 62. Joe Dion, one of the leaders of the MAA, meeting with Métis at Elizabeth Settlement ca. 1939. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives: NA-5127-2.

This legislation enabled the establishment of 12 tracts of land to be set aside as Metis Settlements. Some Métis moved onto the lands. The Government of Alberta appointed their own Metis Committee, who worked with Settlement Associations to govern the communities on the Settlements. The elected MAA leaders were given limited authority in the governance of their communities as they transitioned to life in the Settlements, despite their leadership in advocating for their creation. Over the next two decades, four of the Settlements were closed, and communities were once again displaced.

Nevertheless, the resilient Métis worked to build strong communities in the eight remaining settlements. They cleared land for homes and built roads and other infrastructure. They also established community centres, schools, and other facilities throughout the next few decades.

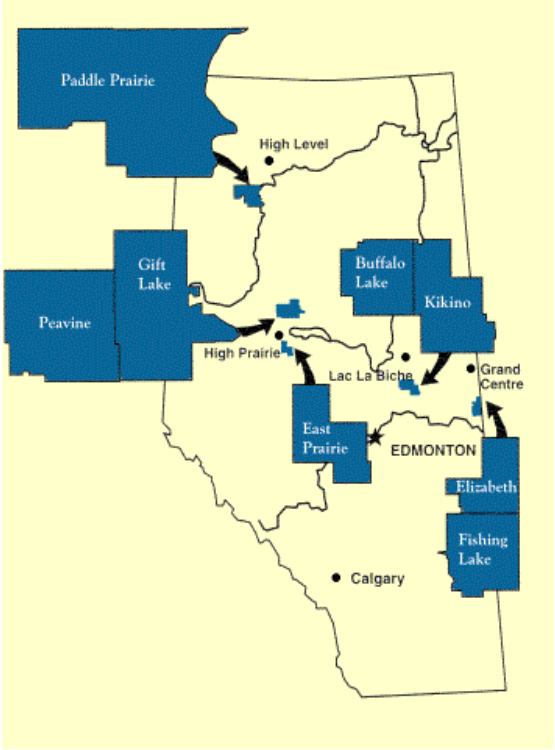


Figure 63. Metis Settlements recognized in *the Metis Settlements Act, 1990*. Photo courtesy of Dennis Wall, https://sites.ualberta.ca/~walld/map.html.

Figure 64. Métis family in cart, Elizabeth Settlement ca. 1957–1959 Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-5127-11.

In 1975, the Settlement Associations collectively formed the Federation of Metis Settlements, who advocated for the Settlement members and formed foundations of self-governance, distinct from the Government of Alberta's control.

Figure 65. Kikino School, ca. 1939–1965. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-5198-16.

They were effective in lobbying the government to sign four key pieces of legislation: *Constitution of Alberta Amendment Act, Métis Settlements Act, Metis Settlements Land Protection Act,* and *Metis Settlements Accord Implementation Act.* The *Metis Settlements Act* established the Metis Settlements General Council and acknowledged the Settlements by names that the Settlement communities chose collectively. [155]

Restoring the Métis Nation:

Métis Nation of Alberta & Metis Settlements General Council

Métis have created governance structures for themselves in Alberta as early as 1897, with the establishment of the St. Alberta Métis Association, who advocated for Métis facing scrip fraud. After that organization quietly dissolved, Métis continued to advocate for their communities.

In 1928, they established *L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest* in response to news that the federal government was giving the provincial governments control of land to open it for settler homesteading. Elected Métis leaders advocated to have the lands on which their communities resided recognized and protected. They worked with the Province of Alberta to establish twelve Metis Settlements in 1938, with four rescinded less than a decade later. The Métis Association of Alberta worked on local, provincial, and national levels to serve Métis citizens throughout this time. In 1991, they became the Métis Nation of Alberta Association, asserting their nationhood in relationship with federal and provincial governments.

Figure 66. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

In 1975, the Metis Settlement Associations gathered to establish the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements Association, also known as the Federation of Metis Settlements. In 1990, the Federation of Metis Settlements was transformed via the *Metis Settlements Act* to become the Metis Settlements General Council (MSGC). [156] They serve the people living on the eight Metis Settlements today.

Figure 67. Metis Settlements General Council flag, https://msgc.ca/.

Métis Homeland Heroes: James Brady

James Patrick Brady is one of the celebrated founders of the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan. He was born in 1908 in St. Paul des Métis.

> James (Jim) Patrick Brady Junior was born March 11, 1908 in St Paul des Metis to James Brady, an Irish immigrant, and Philomena Archange Garneau, the first Métis registered nurse in Alberta and the daughter of Laurent Garneau, a significant figure in the Northwest Resistance . . . and prominent Edmonton businessman.

–Molly Swain, "Victim of Deceit and Self-Deceit: The Role of the State in Undermining Jim Brady's Radical Métis Socialist Politics," thesis, University of Alberta: Edmonton, 2020, 3–4.

Figure 68. James Brady 1944. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-3517-2.

Throughout his life, James passionately studied history and politics. In the early 1900s, he worked with other Métis leaders to organize his Métis community to form what became the foundations of the Métis Nation of Alberta, the Metis Settlements, and, later, the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan. Along with making major political contributions to the Métis Nation, Brady joined the war effort in World War II. He was known to be fluent in Cree, Michif, English, and French.[157] Brady's writing and photography are also included among his celebrated contributions to the legacy of the Métis Nation.

Métis within the Province of British Columbia

Figure 69. Métis Family in Fort St. John, British Columbia. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-494-18.

Métis have historical roots in the area that would become British Columbia dating as early as 1793. [158] As the fur trade moved westward across the Rocky Mountains, the Métis played a significant role in the exploration and development of this area. Historical evidence about Métis communities in British Columbia is more limited than that available in the rest of the Métis Homeland due to the early and profound unwillingness of the Colony of BC (which later became the Province of BC) to recognize **Aboriginal** rights and title generally and Métis rights specifically. [159] When the Half-Breed Scrip Commission travelled through the Homeland at the turn of the 20th Century, the Commission was not permitted to operate inside BC. This meant that Métis families were excluded from acknowledgment in the Scrip System, and a very important source of historical information was lost. [160] Today, the Métis Nation recognizes the north-eastern corner of BC as part of the Homeland due to its essential roots in the Athabasca region, which connect it to Alberta and the Northwest Territories and therefore to the rest of the Homeland. Métis in BC continue to practice their culture across the province, remaining closely connected to kinship networks across the Homeland. [161]

Kelly Lake

Kelly Lake was established as a Métis gathering place by 1910 by families migrating westwards. [162] Many of the original residents were born in Lac Ste. Anne, Alberta, and so close kinship ties have been foundational between these two communities. [163] Kelly Lake is one example of a Métis community in BC that was missed by the 1899 Scrip Commission. Instead, families were told that, if they were able to clear five acres of land, they would receive 160 acres. [164] The families that were able to clear the land formed the Kelly Lake community, which has been recognized as always having been predominantly Métis. [165]

> "Whatever happens we want a land base. We believe that the land base that we are going to be asking for is an inherent right of the Métis. We have been here for over one hundred years and we plan on being here for another hundred. We are just asking for the land that the trappers were using in the early 1800s and kept using into the 1900s. That is what we are asking for. We have documented proof that we have been there since 1870."
>
> –Lyle Letendre, former president of the Kelly Lake Métis Association, in Leah Dorion-Paquin and Todd Paquin Patrick Young, *The Kelly Lake, British Columbia Métis* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2003), 7.

Island Cache

As Métis continued to face the imposition of Euro-Canadian settlement in their Homeland, many families made their homes on unoccupied land claimed by the Euro-Canadian government as Crown land. These families built communities in these areas despite being labelled as “squatters.” The community of Island Cache is one example of a squatting community in BC.

Island Cache was located just before the forks of the Fraser and Nechako Rivers. It was a short-lived Métis road allowance community. Residents of Island Cache and the City of Prince George coexisted until 1970, when the province and the city agreed that the boundaries of the city would expand to encompass both the Island Cache and the industrial areas on the far side of the Nechako River. [166] This meant that the city of Prince George now held direct control over the land of Island Cache.
Following the city expansion, a series of pitched political battles took place, with the Island Cache residents writing reports, launching protests, and seeking a positive compromise with city officials and politicians. City actions ranged from outright hostility and overt attempts to eliminate the community to evident and obvious neglect. [167]

> The erasure of the Island Cache involved the displacement and relocation of the people, and the death of the community, though not the culture of the peoples involved.
>
> –Mike Evans and Stephen Foster, *A Case of Genocide: The Political and Cartographic Erasure of the Island Cache*, 88 (original Source: *Prince George Citizen*, https://www.shimajournal.org/issues/v4n2/g.-Evans-Foster-Shima-v4n2-88-97.pdf) .

Figure 70. House demolition, October 1972, from Mike Evans, *A Case of Genocide*, 88.

In May and June of 1972, a flood decimated the community of Island Cache. During the following months, a combination of building condemnations and sustained economic pressure led 90% of the Island Cache residents to leave their community. Their homes were subsequently bulldozed and burnt, and the community was gone by the following spring. [168]

Restoring the Métis Nation: Métis Nation of British Columbia

Métis in the area that would become British Columbia were community and political leaders throughout the 1800s and 1900s. They participated in a local justice system called the "Victoria Voltigeurs" and worked closely with both Métis and non-Métis to establish a safe place to live. Due to the discriminatory perspectives of Canadian settlers, however, many Métis hid their history, culture, and social structures. They did not establish a formal and distinct governance until the late 1900s. [169]

In 1992, the Métis Provincial Council of British Columbia (MPCBC) was formed as a grassroots vision and organization for the Métis in BC. In 1996, the Métis Nation British Columbia (MNBC) was officially formed with the MPCBC as the operational arm. The MNBC adopted a constitution in 2003. [170]

Figure 71. Métis Nation British Columbia logo, https://www.mnbc.ca

Métis within the Province of Ontario

The Great Lakes in Ontario connected Métis across the Homeland and specifically to Red River. People moved back and forth between communities and travelled regularly between them as part of their fur trade duties. [171] The importance of the fur trade economy and the role Métis voyageurs played in the Great Lakes have been highlighted by Métis scholars and communities. [172]

> "Geographically, the beginning of the Métis Nation is around the Great Lakes. The raising of the first flag, as I said, was on the Prairies, but our communities first began to be established in the 1700s here in Ontario because of the fur trade route."

–Tony Belcourt, former MNO president, quoted in Chris Andersen, *Métis Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 146.

Figure 72. Fishing in St. Mary's River. Collection of Sault Ste. Marie Public Library Archives, https://liatris52.wordpress.com/2017/02/22/surviving-and-thriving-against-all-odds-metis-at-sault-sainte-marie/.

Historic Métis communities in Ontario became more widely recognized in 2003. This changed with the court case *R. v. Powley*, which recognized a historical Métis presence in the community of Sault Ste. Marie. Since then, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) has conducted research throughout the province to identify other historic Métis communities. The MNO identifies a historic Metis community through several pieces of evidence: their own shared **customs**; practices; traditions; demographic evidence that the population was identified as distinct; and evidence that they had their own collective identity. [173]

The Métis Nation of Ontario has recognized seven historic Métis communities in the province. These communities have demonstrated resilience and Métis ways of being.

Historic Métis Communities in Ontario:

- Rainy River/Lake of the Woods/Treaty 3 Historic Métis Community
- Northern Lake Superior Historic Métis Community
- Abitibi Inland Historic Métis Community
- Sault Ste. Marie and Environs Métis Community
- Mattawa/Ottawa River and Environs Historic Métis Community
- Killarney and Environs Historic Métis Community
- Georgian Bay and Environs Historic Métis Community

–Métis Nation of Ontario, "Historical Métis Communities in Ontario," updated March 2, 2020, https://www.metisnation.org/registry/citizenship/historic-metis-communities-in-ontario/.
"Environs" means the surrounding area.

Sault Ste. Marie

One of the historical Métis communities that the MNO recognizes is Sault Ste. Marie. Métis presence in the region dates to the mid-1700s through the fur trade. Hunting, fishing, and trapping were very important to the Métis economy and culture, as they tied them to both the fur trade and the land. [174]

> Research on the Métis in the upper Great Lakes region has "emphasized the movement and mobility of fur trade agents in and out of Sault Ste. Marie on an annual migratory basis. It should not be surprising, then, to find commonalities and affiliations in the circulation of people, goods, cultural meanings, and identities in locales as historically distant from each other as Red River and the upper Great Lakes."

–Chris Andersen, *Métis*, 147.

Importantly, the Métis in the Sault Ste. Marie area were acknowledged as being separate and distinct from other area communities. When the Robinson Treaties were negotiated in 1850, First Nations in the area attempted to organize a separate inclusion in the annual gifts and negotiations that were part of the Treaty process for the Métis. Euro-Canadian settlers viewed the Métis as being distinct from both themselves and First Nations. The Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850 distinguishes "Indians" from "half-breeds" in Sault Ste. Marie. [175]

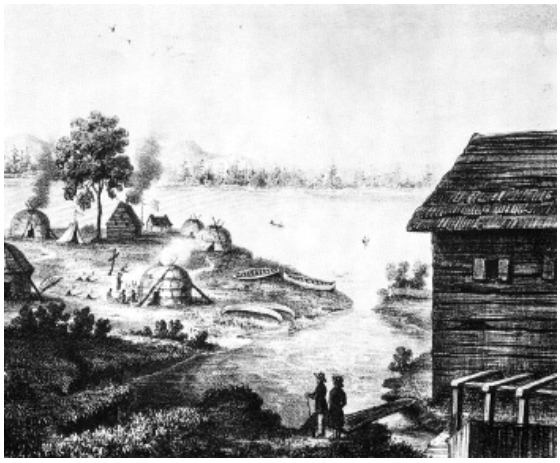


Figure 73. "Early Métis Community of Sault Ste. Marie," Métis Nation of Ontario, https://www.metisnation.org/culture-heritage/metis-timeline/.

"Métis and First Nations from present day Sault Ste. Marie and along the north shore of Lake Superior objected to the Quebec Mining Company trespassing on their traditional lands at Mica Bay because there was no treaty with the Crown in the territory. The company's agents surrendered without resistance. This became known as the 'Mica Bay incident' and led to the Robinson Treaties (Superior and Huron) between the Crown and 'Indians.' Treaty Commissioner Robinson stated he had no mandate to deal with Métis. In September of 1850, the Métis of Sault Ste. Marie addressed a petition to Lord Elgin, Governor General of the Province of Canada that asked for them to be recognized and compensated for the loss of their lands. This petition, like most other forms of 'soft' protest, went unanswered. In February 1852, instead of being given recognition of ownership of lands they had lived on for generations, the Sault Ste. Marie Métis were told they would be 'allowed' to purchase land grants of fifty acres, on which they lived, for 1 shilling per acre. While a continuous Métis presence remained in Sault Ste. Marie, it became much smaller in size. The 1861 census of Sault Ste. Marie indicated that this Métis village, which had 250 Métis in 1845, was reduced down to three Métis families."

–Métis Nation of Ontario, personal communication with RCTL, February 18, 2021.

Despite their efforts to have their rights recognized, the Métis were excluded from the Robinson Treaties. Following their signing, Euro-Canadian settlement increased in the area, pushing Métis out of their traditional homes. Métis families were relocated to towns and areas in and around Sault Ste. Marie extending to Batchewana, Goulais Bay, Garden River, Bruce Mines, Desbarats, Bar River, St. Joseph's Island, Sugar Island, and into Northern Michigan. [176] Métis in this region continued to hunt, fish, trap, and practice traditional ways of life. They continued to be recognized as distinct from both First Nations and Euro-Canadian populations. Only in 2003 did they establish rights to the lands on which they had resided for over 200 years.

Rainy River/Lake of the Woods/Treaty 3 Historic Métis Community

Métis in the Rainy River/Lake of the Woods region established an interconnected community in the area based on trade. In 1787, the North-West Company established Fort Lac La Pluie (renamed "Fort Frances" in 1830) in the region. This marked the first official recognition of Métis in the area, as they were documented as being company workers. The community persisted, and fur trade and census records documented a deeply interconnected and identifiable Métis population in the area from the 1800s to the early 1900s. [177] A clear distinction was made between the Métis and other groups in the area. This was recognized by both First Nations tribes in the region and government records, which differentiate between "Indians" and "half-breeds." [178]

Figure 74. George McPherson and Family, Lake of the Woods Ontario. McPherson was a trader and acted as an interpreter in the Treaty 3 negotiations. Library and Archives Canada / C-079642.

> We call upon all Ontarians to join us in solidarity to learn more about our Métis community as well as our unique place in the treaty-making process in Ontario. Through education, we hope our community and citizens will ultimately see justice in relation to our unique Métis Treaty with the Crown.

–Margaret Froh, President of the Métis Nation of Ontario, "MNO Highlights Halfbreed Adhesion to Treaty No. 3," November 3, 2020, https://www.metisnation.org/news/mno-highlights-halfbreed-adhesion-to-treaty-no-3-as-a-part-of-treaties-recog.

When Treaty 3 was negotiated in the 1870s and signed in 1873, there was no recognition of Métis, their land rights, or their way of life. The Métis community in the Fort Frances area saw Canada recognize First Nations as bands and thus petitioned the government to recognize them as a separate "half-breed band" with their own Chief. [179] They had a unified, distinct identity as a community, which was finally recognized in 1875 in the **Halfbreed Adhesion to Treaty 3**. On September 12, 1875, this was signed by Nicolas Chastelain as "Chief" of the "Halfbreeds of Rainy River and Lake." [180] The Treaty Adhesion promised the Métis land, annuities, and presents, the same benefits given to First Nations under the original treaty. These promises were not kept by the federal government.

Figure 75. McPherson family home in Lake of the Woods, Library and Archives Canada/C-079652.

The Halfbreed Adhesion to Treaty 3 is the only instance of a Métis community collectively agreeing to one of the historic treaties negotiated with First Nations across Canada. While Métis could be brought into treaties as individuals in other areas of Canada, the Halfbreed Adhesion to Treaty 3 provided for the collective recognition and protection of the Métis of Rainy Lake and River as a distinct group. [181] Despite the movement away from the term "half-breed," the Métis in this area continue to self-identify themselves as "half-breeds" because of the Treaty 3 Adhesion.

"The Métis of Rainy River and Rainy Lake lived, worked, and harvested on the lands that were acquired by the Canadian government when Treaty No. 3 was signed in 1873. Fearful that they may be pushed off their land, they repeatedly pressured the government to allow them entry into Treaty. The 1875 adhesion entered the 'Half Breeds' of Rainy River and Rainy Lake into Treaty, promising them two separate reserves, annuity payments, and harvesting and hunting rights. Ultimately, the Métis never received their reserve lands and the government failed to fulfill its Treaty obligations. However, though their success was fleeting, the Treaty No. 3 Adhesion represented the rightful acknowledgement of Métis as a distinct people."

–Métis Nation of Ontario, personal communication with RCTL, April 8, 2021.

Restoring the Métis Nation: Métis Nation of Ontario

The predecessor of the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) was the Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association (OMNSIA), which was created in the 1970s as part of the Native Council of Canada (NCC). The NCC was formed in 1970 by leaders of the Métis Association of Alberta, the Métis Society of Saskatchewan, the Manitoba Métis Federation, and the BC Association of Non-Status Indians. [182] Tony Belcourt was elected as the NCC's first president. Their collective goal was to ensure Métis rights and voices were recognized and heard by federal and provincial governments.

Figure 76. Métis Nation of Ontario logo, https://www.metisnation.org.

In 1993, the MNO was established through the will of Métis people and communities coming together throughout Ontario to create a Métis-specific governance structure. Métis in Ontario had been involved in pan-Aboriginal lobby groups and organizations in the years leading up to the establishment of their distinct governance.

"Métis communities emerged in various areas surrounding the Upper Great Lakes as well as along the waterways and fur trade routes of what is now known as Ontario prior to the Crown effecting legal and political control in those regions. These historic Métis communities developed their own shared customs, traditions, and collective identities that are rooted in kinship, a special relationship to the land, and a distinct culture and way of life that persists to the present day.

"In 1993, the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) was established through the will of Métis people and their communities coming together throughout Ontario to create a Métis-specific, democratic, province wide governance structure. The MNO represents and advocates on behalf of its citizens who are rights-bearing members of Métis communities that collectively hold rights, interests, and outstanding claims protected by sections 25 and 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, including, but not limited to, the right of self-government. Ontario is home to the 2003 Powley decision, in which the Supreme Court of Canada recognized the existence of the Métis right to harvest for food that is protected by Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution.

"The MNO was the first Métis government in the Homeland to successfully complete negotiations with their provincial government regarding Métis harvesting through the signing of an interim agreement in 2004 regarding the MNO's Harvester Card system. On April 30, 2018 the MNO and Ontario signed a new Framework Agreement on Métis Harvesting. The MNO manages the harvest through a Captain of the Hunt system that supports Métis harvesters who exercise their way of life on the land in a safe, sustainable, responsible and respectful way.

"MNO currently operates with governance structures at the provincial, regional, and local levels with more than 30 active Community Councils. MNO delivers a wide range of programs and services that are delivered to citizens and communities throughout Ontario by over 250 employees.

"There are approximately 23,000 MNO citizens on the MNO's registry. The MNO has been one of the governing members of the Métis National Council (MNC) since 1994.

"Many stories and events significant to the Métis of Ontario can be found at https://www.metisnation.org/news/timeline-pre-confederation-to-self-government/."

–Métis Nation of Ontario, personal communication with RCTL, February 18, 2021.

Métis within the Northwest Territories

The Northwest Territories is a territory in north-central Canada with Yellowknife as its capital. The territory evolved from the North-West, which was once the entire area known then as "Rupert's Land." As Canada's provinces were constituted over time, the remaining land known as the "North-West" shrank. In 1912, the region was formally constituted as the "Northwest Territories" until 1999, when the territory of Nunavut was created. [183] As explored earlier in the theme, the **historical North-West** overlaps with most of the Métis Nation's Homeland, including the southern areas of the present-day Northwest Territories.

A few of the communities in the Northwest Territories have stories rooted in generations of Métis history. The two featured here give a sense of the presence, culture, and history of Métis since the late 18th century.

Fort Smith

Métis families can be traced to the Northwest Territories as early as 1770. [184] Fort Smith was established in connection with the introduction of the steamboat, used to transport supplies and furs. In 1874, Métis man Joseph King Beaulieu founded the community on the left bank of the Slave River at the foot of the rapids. Fort Smith was a stopping point on the transportation system of the north when it was customary to portage around rapids that were 15 miles long on the Slave River. [185] The river connected Métis in this area to their kin across the Homeland.

Figure 77. A trapper and his furs, Fort Smith, ca. 1910. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NB-6-61.

Willow Flats

The settlement of Métis families in the Yellowknife region can be traced back to the fur trade in the 1770s. Families were able to maintain kinship ties across the Homeland through the waterways in the area. In 1933, gold was discovered in the Yellowknife River, which rapidly accelerated settlement in the region. This was further enabled by new transportation systems by both water and air. Gold-hungry Euro-Canadian settlers imposed upon Métis families in their homes and livelihoods, pushing them to the outskirts of society. Families settled in an area called "Willow Flats," a road allowance community on the outskirts of Yellowknife.

> "They burnt sewage, cars, gas cans, everything. Small explosions were always happening. Sometimes it would burn for three weeks. The government had a place for the Indians, but they couldn't get the Métis to move, so they moved the dump there and burnt it steady for several years. Métis families tried to stick it out. The options were stay near the dump and die, or move to low-cost housing."

–Clem Paul, former President of the North Slave Métis Alliance, in Lawrence Barkwell, *Métis Homeland: Its Settlements and Communities*, 210.

As the city continued to grow, the government sought to dispossess Métis of their landholdings as part of their plan for expansion. [186] In the early 1960s, the government began to forcibly remove the First Nations from the area and relocate them to new settlement areas. Unlike the Dene, Métis were offered, not a settlement area, but low-cost housing in the new town. [187] Many Métis families living in the community refused to move. As a result, the city moved the municipal garbage dump to the area. Homes were bulldozed, and the people lost everything. The city deliberately disempowered Métis by refusing to survey the lands on which they had settled. [188]

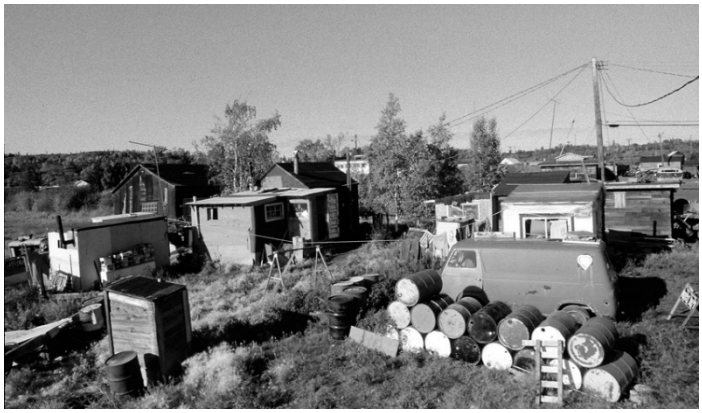


Figure 78. Willowflats and The Woodyard, Fran Hurcomb, "The Woodyard: Surviving Progress," https://edgenorth.ca/article/the-woodyard-surviving-progress.

Restoring the Métis Nation: Métis Nation of the Northwest Territories

In 1972, the Métis Nation of the Northwest Territories (MNNWT) was formed to represent Métis in the Northwest Territories. This organization was disbanded in favour of the pursuit of regional claims. The North Slave Métis Alliance and the South Slave Métis Council were founded shortly after.

The South Slave Métis Council was the predecessor of what became the Northwest Territories Métis Nation (NWTMN) in 1996. In the same year, the NWTMN, the Government of the Northwest Territories, and the Government of Canada signed the NWTMN **Framework Agreement** to commence negotiations on land, resources, and **self-government.** On July 31, 2015, The Parties signed the Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) on land and resource matters. The Parties are currently negotiating a Final Land and Resources Agreement and are negotiating an agreement for self-government.

Figure 79. Building scow boats at Fort Smith, 1926. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, G-1-1712-2.

Métis within the United States of America

Métis families were establishing their communities throughout the Homeland in the late 1700s and early 1800s, long before the colonial nations imposed their boundary lines on the land. The border separating the United States and Canada at the 49th parallel was not established until 1818, and it was not until the 1870s that the international boundary was formally surveyed. The imposition of this physically invisible line drastically affected Métis lives, mobility, economy, and, ultimately, culture. Following the 1870 and 1885 Resistance efforts, many Métis in Canada sought refuge with their kin on the southern half of the border.

> "The mobility of such Indigenous peoples as the Plains Métis was also an obvious reminder of the preexisting territorialities and sovereignties that new national borders such as the forty-ninth parallel sought to overwrite. The ongoing movement of the Métis laid bare one of the central fictions of new national geographies: that Indigenous peoples were internal subjects who had accepted their place within the nation, rather than sovereign peoples."
>
> –Michel Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), 6.

Montana

Métis communities had established themselves in the region that would later become Montana in the early half of the 1800s. They found themselves in constant battle with U.S. federal and territorial officials, who were determined to stake their claims in the region. Families were subject to repeated raids, fines, imprisonment, and seizure of goods based on the argument that they had "smuggled" goods across the border without a license. [189]

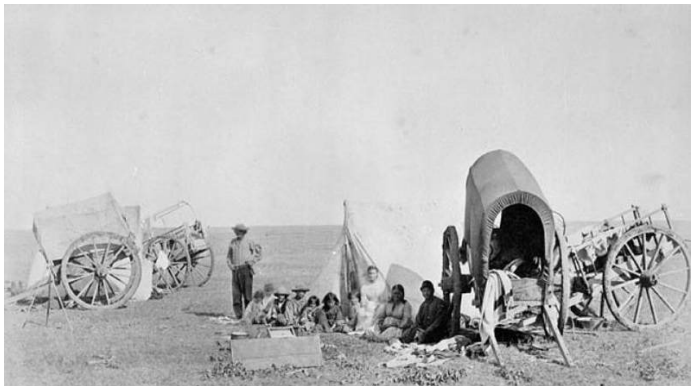


Figure 80. Métis camp with Red River Carts. Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, R-A3955.

My family, the LaPierres, first came to the Rocky Mountain Front before Montana became a territory. The Rocky Mountain Front of Montana is where the mountains meet the prairies, semi-arid and in some places almost desert-like. In the 1850s Antoine LaPierre moved his entire family there to work, initially as buffalo hunters, but eventually as hands for local cattle ranchers or on their own as wood-hawkers.

Figure 81. Rosalyn LaPier, "Montana's Metis People," *Montana Naturalist*, (Winter 2013/2014): 4.

Euro-American settlers in Montana increasingly viewed Métis kinship ties to First Nations as worrisome. They also questioned Métis national identity, viewing them largely as illegal Canadian immigrants. [190] Following the 1870 Resistance efforts and the failure of the Canadian government to grant the Métis land in Red River, a large influx of Métis moved into Montana. Many settlers called for the expulsion of all Métis from Montana regardless of their citizenship. [191]

In 1879, several hostilities were reported between settlers, Métis, and Native Americans (as called in the USA) in Montana. [192] The Métis were accused of providing weapons and ammunition to Native American forces. In July of that year, U.S. colonial officials were determined to force the Métis to return to Canada. A total of 829 Métis were arrested and deported across the border back into Canada. [193] Many Métis returned to Montana following their expulsion, and more joined them following the 1885 North-West Resistance.

Turtle Mountain

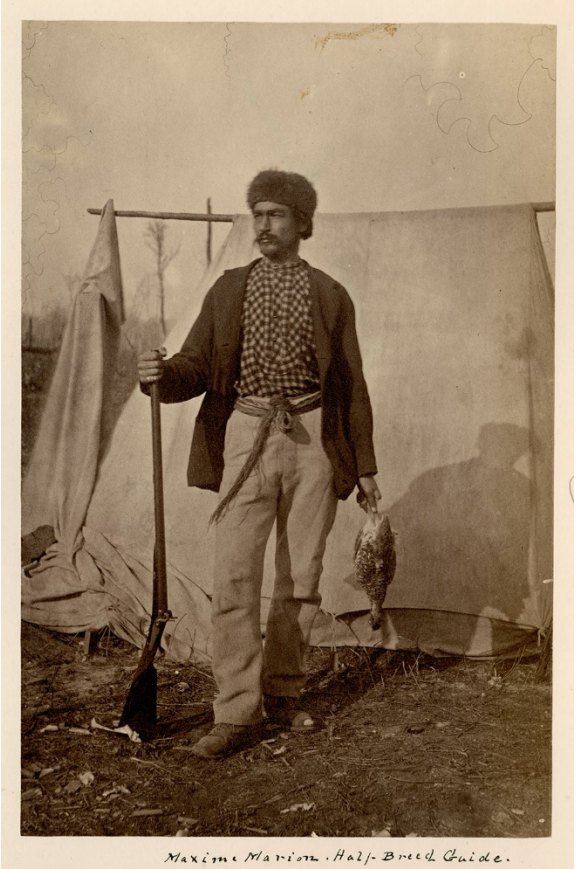
The Métis at Turtle Mountain remained closely tied to the Métis in the Red River area; they were directly connected by the waterways. Métis in this region confronted difficulties and managed to retain their identity in the face of opposition. Their greatest challenge came from the U.S. government and its suffocating paternal policies, which attempted to undermine their distinct Métis identity. Tenacious resilience has for generations been one of the Turtle Mountain people's greatest strengths. [194]

> American land surveyors who arrived in 1867 recorded that "There were a great many here [St. Joseph], and they lived on pounded meat or 'pemmican.' They call themselves 'Plains Hunters' and make their annual summer visits to the plains with horses, oxen carts and families to produce the meat and robes and return in the late fall. . . . This pemmican trade is like our fisheries and is carried out almost as extensively, 300 carts going out from this place in one train."
>
> –Nicholas Vrooman, "Realization of the Metis Traditional Historic homeland," in *Metis Legacy*, eds. Lawrence Barkwell, Leah Dorion, and Darren Préfontaine (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publishing Company, 2001), 54–55.

The influx of Euro-American settlement into the Turtle Mountain region was worrisome for the Métis residing in the area. The 1863 Treaty with the Chippewa of Red Lake and Pembina Bands made provisions for their Métis relations, but many were excluded from the agreements. [195] The U.S. federal government often measured **blood quantum** to decide who was entitled to Native American rights. These regulations were deeply racist and ultimately undermined Métis identity, culture, and sovereignty.

In 1882, the Turtle Mountain Métis acted against settlers who had been squatting on their lands. This is just one example of the Métis continuing to assert themselves against colonial authority.

Figure 81. Turtle Mountain Métis on the Plains; Lawrence Barkwell and Larry Haag, "The Pembina and Turtle Mountain Métis & Chippewa," Lecture for International Metisfest, International Peace Gardens, n.d.



The lives of our relatives in the North Dakota settlements and the communities of St. Joseph and Pembina changed too. At the end of the American Civil War in 1865, settlers came to the territory. Settlers disrupted the cart trade to St. Paul.

–Catherine Littlejohn and Ron Rivard, *The History of the Métis of Willow Bunch* (Saskatoon: self-published, 2003), 106.

Figure 82. Maxime Marion, Lake of the Woods, Ontario, 1872. Marion was a guide for the British-Canadian Boundary Commission and signatory to the Turtle Mountain Treaty. Library and Archives Canada / C-079643.

Restoring the Métis Nation: Métis Governance in the United States

During the early to mid-1800s with the creation and surveying of the border, there was evident confusion regarding the rights of Métis, both as a Nation and as individuals, in the United States and Canada. At the time, the U.S. government had polarized identity into the two categories of "Indian" or "white." This **dichotomy** [c] continues today, as the Métis people residing in the United States continue to face the severe disadvantage of not being able to get the federal government to recognize them as being distinctly Métis. Left with few options, some Métis are affiliated with the Native American tribe from which they are descended to receive any recognition of Indigeneity. [196] Others continue to fight for their distinction on a federal level. The Métis know who they are, and, despite the lack of recognition from Euro-American colonial governments, they have always practiced and continue to practice Métis culture and ways of life.

[c] A dichotomy is a division or contrast between two things that are or are represented as being opposed or entirely different.

Resurgence of the Métis Nation

Métis around the Homeland resiliently survived and worked to secure safe places for their families throughout the 1890s and into the mid-1900s despite their dispossession and oppression at the hands of Canadian governments and settlers. While the impacts of dispossession and discrimination would last until the 21st century, many Métis "never lost sight of the Métis Nation" and worked hard to care for their families and communities. [197]

It was not until after World War II that Métis noticed minor changes in their relationship with Canada. As highlighted in Jean Teillet's *The North-West is Our Mother*, Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians fought alongside each other during the war. This period fostered "the new understanding that all people deserved to be treated with dignity, that we are all human, and that there is no honour and never an excuse for oppression based on race, religion, culture, or colour." [198] This shift in worldview had a noticeable impact, as Euro-Canadians began to reconsider their view of Métis as just rebellious Canadians, seeing them instead as a people alongside other Indigenous peoples. Despite the minor indications of progress, it is important to recognize that Métis continued to face racism upon returning to Canada. They continued to struggle with a government that did not recognize their inherent rights as Indigenous peoples and the lasting effects of discriminatory Canadian government policies that continued to play a role within Euro-Canadian practice.

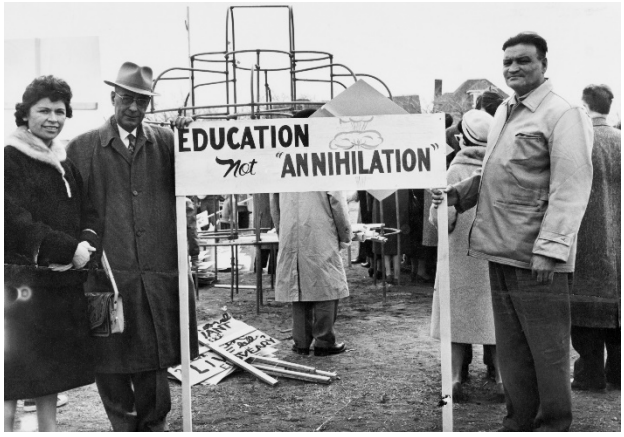


Figure 83. Malcom Norris and James Brady, founding members of the Métis Association of Alberta, with Jean Cuthand at a demonstration in Regina, Saskatchewan, April 1, 1961. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives PA-2218-943.

> The period after the Second World War (1945) was one of great upheaval for Aboriginal Peoples. The nature of government changed. . . . New interpretations of history, and new research, showed that the Metis were something more than just rebels. These changes also indicated that they had a valid claim against the Canadian government.
>
> –Shore, "Threads in the Sash," 117.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the Métis continued gathering in their communities, celebrating their culture, advocating for their people, and resiliently surviving ongoing dispossession and displacement. Families endured many systemic injustices, including the residential and industrial school system and the Sixties Scoop. There are many stories from communities around the Homeland describing the community life that Métis were passionate about protecting. At this time, communities around the Homeland began to restore the Nation through provincial organizations. Métis Nation leaders from the provinces gathered and emerged with a national voice that fuelled a resurgence of the Métis Nation and a new national resistance against colonial pressure across the Homeland.

Métis Aboriginal Rights Recognized and Affirmed: *Constitution Act, 1982*

Canada's constitution was a topic of debate for three decades starting in the late 1960s. Métis across the country lobbied the government to ensure that they were properly consulted and acknowledged in the ***Constitution Act***. Harry Daniels emerged on the political stage during this time. In the early 1980s, he became a powerful voice of the Métis Nation in the constitutional debates. He fought for the rights of his people, arguing that the Métis Nation's identity was suppressed and denied by the federal government. [199] It was proposed that Section 35 of the *Constitution Act* would include "the existing aboriginal and treaty rights" of Aboriginal people more generally. Daniels was told that the term "aboriginal peoples" would generously include the Métis in future instances; however, he continued to lobby the committee members tenaciously for a distinct inclusion and recognition of the Métis. [200]

The hard work of Daniels and the lawyers he worked with paid off when a new sub-clause defining Métis as one of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada was announced as a last-minute amendment to the Aboriginal rights clause. [201]

> 35. (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.
>
> (2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.
>
> –*The Constitution Act, 1982,* Schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982* (UK), 1982, c 11, https://canlii.ca/t/ldsx.

Some of the Canadian committee members were not even aware of who the Métis were at the time. One scholar, Gregg Dahl, spoke with Ms. Mary Dawson, who drafted Section 35 under the instructions of then-Justice Minister Jean Chrétien. He said she told him that "she was not aware of any discussion about who the people were that were referenced by the term 'Métis' before it was included in section 35(2)." [202] Having the Métis included in the constitution is an incredible achievement accredited to Daniels' passionate lobbying.

The impacts of this clause have been monumental for the Métis Nation. This wording was "designed to give protection to the rights of Aboriginal collectives," meaning the Métis could finally hold the Government of Canada accountable in a **nation-to-nation** relationship. [203] This acknowledgment has been foundational to much of the justice achieved for Métis today. Two of the most important impacts that this achievement has had for the Métis Nation is the establishment of the Métis National Council and the *R. v. Daniels* decision. Other important impacts of this decision are explored in the foundational knowledge theme *Métis Nation Governance.*

> For generations, the Métis Nation has struggled for recognition and justice in the Canadian federation. In 1982, the existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples in Canada were recognized and affirmed in s. 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. This was a watershed for the Métis Nation, with the explicit recognition of the Métis as one of the three distinct Aboriginal peoples.
>
> – Métis Nation of Ontario, "Governance: Métis National Council," https://www2.metisnation.ca/about/governance/.

Métis Homeland Heroes: Harry Daniels

Métis leader, social activist, author, and actor, Harry Daniels is remembered as one of Canada's most visible and charismatic modern Indigenous leaders. Daniels spent over 40 years fighting for the rights of Indigenous peoples on both a national and international level. He participated in politics across the Homeland and worked as the executive director of the Saskatchewan Métis Society, vice president of the Métis Nation of Alberta, secretary-treasurer of the NCC, Commissioner of the Métis and Non-Status Indian Constitutional Review Commission of the NCC, and president of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. Among his many contributions, two are particularly prominent: his lobbying of the Government of Canada to have the Métis included in the Constitution Act, 1982; and the *Daniels v. Canada* case, which reached a conclusion in the Supreme Court of Canada in 2016.

> Harry Daniels "loved to debate, and believe me, you had better be a good critical thinker if you were spending time with him . . . . Later in his life, he would probably be wearing a $1000 pinstripe suit, looking like an old 1930's outlaw. Back in the 60's, he would have walked in with his neatly-pressed blue jeans, cowboy boots, all polished and shiny, and his black hat tipped back just so on top of his long, curly hair."
>
> –Maria Campbell, quoted in Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research, *Daniels: In and Beyond the Law: Conference Report* (University of Alberta, 2017), 8.

> Louis Riel put the Métis into the Canadian Constitution with their inclusion in the Manitoba Act, 1870. Harry Daniels got the Métis included in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.
>
> –Teillet, "The North-West is Our Mother," 443.

Figure 84. Harry Daniels. Photo courtesy of the Métis Nation of Alberta, http://albertametis.com/metis-rights/supreme-court/daniels-v-canada-2016/.

Establishment of Métis National Council, 1983

The province-based community stories mention how Métis advocated for themselves through organizations that lobbied provincial governments in the mid-1900s. In the 1970s, Métis joined with Non-Status Indians to establish the NCC to give these under-represented groups a national voice. Despite their differences, working within the Native Council of Canada allowed Métis and Non-Status Indians to "put pressure on the Government of Canada to be included in benefit programs that were available to other Aboriginal peoples." [204]

> Prior to the holding of the constitutionally guaranteed First Minister Conference to further identify and define the rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, it became apparent that the Métis Nation needed to be able to represent itself at a national level through its own voice—a Métis voice.
>
> – Métis Nation of Ontario, "Governance: Métis National Council," https://www2.metisnation.ca/about/governance/.

The three prairie Métis associations (Métis Association of Alberta, Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, and Manitoba Métis Federation) were a part of the NCC, which advocated primarily for the rights of Aboriginal people in Canada.

It became clear to Métis leaders that, given the federal recognition of Métis as a distinct Aboriginal people in the *Constitution Act, 1982,* it was essential that the Métis represent themselves as a distinct Nation. In 1983, the Métis Nation separated from the NCC and established the Métis National Council (MNC). The MNC represented the voices of Métis on national and international levels, working to ensure a "healthy space for the Métis Nation's on-going existence within the Canadian federation." [205]

Daniels v. Canada (Indian Affairs and Northern Development)

The existence of the MNC and the constitutional declaration recognizing Métis as an Aboriginal group in Canada did not hinder Canadian leaders from continuing to delegate their relationship with and responsibilities to Métis to provincial governments, as if the Métis were still a settler minority group.

> The government continues to feed us the two founding nations myth while tossing in some Ukrainian Easter eggs, Italian grapes, or Métis bannock for some extra flavor.
>
> – Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research, *Daniels: In and Beyond the Law: Conference Report* (University of Alberta, 2017), 7. Bolding added.

> Even after the Métis were recognized in the Constitution Act, 1982 as one of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, the Federal Government continued to exclude them from programs and from any processes to address Métis land settlements. The Métis, under the leadership of Harry Daniels, had no choice but to bring their grievances to court.
>
> – Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research, *Daniels: In and Beyond the Law*, 8.

The Government of Canada failed to acknowledge Métis despite their commitment in the *Constitution Act, 1982*. In response, Métis leaders brought them to court in 1999. *Daniels v. Canada (Indian Affairs and Northern Development*; "the Daniels case" henceforth) was a seventeen-year legal battle that began in 1999 and finally ended in 2016.

Twelve years after the declarations were made by the plaintiffs, the case went to trial in the Federal Court of Canada in May 2011. In 2013, the judge ruled that Métis and Non-Status peoples were "Indians" under the *Constitution Act (1867).* The other declarations were not granted, which led to an appeal in 2014 and another in 2016.

> Three declarations set out in the case:
> (1) that Métis and Non-Status Indians are "Indians" as defined in section 91 of the Constitution Act;
> (2) that the Crown owes a fiduciary duty to Métis and Non-Status Indians as Indigenous peoples; and
> (3) that Métis and Non-Status Indians have the right to be consulted and negotiated with by the Federal Government as to their rights, interests, and needs as Indigenous peoples.
>
> – Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research, *Daniels: In and Beyond the Law*, 8.

Finally, in 2016, the "Federal Court held that Métis and non-status Indians are 'Indians' within the meaning of s. (24) of the Constitution Act, 1867. The result is that all aboriginal individuals in Canada are now within federal jurisdiction." [206] This reaffirmed the Crown's **fiduciary** relationship with Aboriginal peoples, including Métis and non-status Indians. [207]

> "We represent a whole nation of people who have been alienated. We have been trying for more than a century to get into confederation."

–Harry Daniels, quoted in Jean Teillet, "The North-West is Our Mother," 440.

Until the Daniels case, the Government of Canada argued that it could not legislate on matters regarding the Métis. The 2016 ruling paved the way for new discussions, negotiations, and possible **litigation** with the federal government over land claims and access to education, health programs, and other government services. [208] The Daniels Case laid the legal groundwork for Canada to begin acknowledging and working with Métis as a self-determining, self-governing Nation.

Figure 85. MNA President Audrey Poitras (right) and MNA Legal Counsel Jason Madden (left) review the Daniels outcome. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta, http://albertametis.com/2016/04/daniels-case-decision-a-massive-victory-for-metis-rights/v.

Homeland History in the Making: 1980s–2020

By the 1980s, it had been 100 years since the first national resistance movements against the Government of Canada began. While generations of Métis had to assert their Nationhood with physical resilience to be acknowledged, the Government of Canada now began listening to the assertions of Métis through the legal and justice systems. The **self-determination** efforts of the Métis Nation fuelled their resilient survival of years of dispossession and displacement. The work of the Nation throughout the 1900s built the strong foundation on which Métis today continue resiliently determining self-governance for their Nation. Where the Nation is today in its self-governing efforts was well-summarized by Métis lawyer Jason Madden:

> "We may not be picking up guns or doing armed resistance anymore, in fact for the last 15 years we've been in the courts fighting for recognition and making sure that our inherent right of self-government and self-determination is recognized by the Government. What's really important now is the work that the Métis need to do to . . . achieve the vision that Riel and leaders over the generations have had for the Métis Nation."

–Jason Madden, "MNA Advancing Métis Nation Self Government in Alberta," 0:25–1:33 (2018).–Jason Madden, "MNA Advancing Métis Nation Self Government in Alberta," YouTube, 0:25–1:33 (2018),

As Métis fight to build a self-determining future for their children and Nation, they continue to come together in celebration of their distinct history. Across the Homeland, Métis are teaching each other and celebrating the traditions that have unified their families for generations.

R. v. Powley

In 1993, two Métis community members, Steve and Roddy Powley, were charged with "hunting moose without a license and unlawful possession of moose contrary to Ontario's *Game and Fish Act*" near Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. [209] The Powley family, the Métis Nation of Ontario, and the "Métis Nation Council, on behalf of the entire Métis Nation" challenged this conviction on the basis that Section 35 protected their Aboriginal right to hunting as Métis people. [210] The Métis right to hunt had not yet been acknowledged in Canadian courts, so this case was recognized as a test for Métis rights. [211]

At the first trial, the Powleys were acquitted after the trial judge ruled that their right to hunt was protected under Section 35. However, the Crown appealed this ruling to the Ontario Superior Court of Justice and then to the Ontario Court of Appeal. Both courts upheld the original ruling. [212] In 2003, the Crown appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, and again the court ruled unanimously that as Métis people and members of a Métis community, the Powleys "can exercise a Métis right to hunt that is protected by s. 35." [213] The final decision that Steve and Roddy Powley were indeed within their rights to harvest and hunt in their traditional hunting areas affirmed the inclusion of Métis in Section 35 of the *Constitution Act,* protecting all Métis rights as Aboriginal rights.

> "With their decision in R. v. Powley, the highest court of this land has finally done what the parliament of Canada and provincial governments have refused to do for generations —deliver justice to the Métis people."

–Audrey Poitras, President of the Métis Nation of Alberta, quoted in "Fulfilling Canada's Promise. Métis Rights. Recognized and Affirmed. R. v. Powley," Métis Nation of Ontario Case Summary, https://www.metisnation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/r_v_powley_mncfulfillingcanadapromise.pdf.

Figure 86. Then-MNO President Tony Belcourt and lawyer Jean Teillet with Steve Powley after the first trial (photo credit: Marc Germaine/MNO), http://albertametis.com/metis-rights/supreme-court/the-powley-story/.

Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. v. Canada

In 1981, the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) filed a claim against the Government of Canada and the Government of Manitoba seeking the declaration that "the lands they were promised in the *Manitoba Act, 1870* were not provided in accordance with the Crown's fiduciary and honour of the Crown obligations." [214] In 1870, when the Government of Canada decided that it would take over the lands that would become Manitoba, residents of Red River (representing 12, 000 residents, including 10, 000 Métis) protested and demanded that their rights to land be properly acknowledged. Sections 31 and 32 of the *Manitoba Act, 1870* include a "provision to protect existing land holdings of the 3000 Métis adult land holders (s.32) and a provision to give the 7000 Métis children a head start with a grant 1.4 million acres of land." [215]

The Métis sought a declaration that:

(1) "in implementing the Manitoba Act, the federal Crown breached fiduciary obligations owed to the Metis;

(2) the federal Crown failed to implement the Manitoba Act in a manner consistent with the honour of the Crown;

(3) certain legislation passed by Manitoba affecting the implementation of the Manitoba Act was ultra vires."

–*Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. v. Canada* (Attorney General), 2013 SCC 14.

After twenty-six years of litigation through the Supreme Court of Canada, the MMF lost at trial in 2007. The judge dismissed the action, stating that "there was lengthy delay in implementing the land provisions of the Manitoba Act" due to government error and inaction; he held that only individuals could bring the claim, not the MMF. [216] The MMF appealed the case in 2010, but the original decision was upheld.

Justice finally arrived for the Métis Nation at the Supreme Court of Canada on March 8, 2013. The MMF's appeal was granted. The ruling held that "the federal Crown failed to implement the land grant provision set out in s.31 of the Manitoba Act, 1870 in accordance with the honour of the Crown." [217]

What is at issue is a constitutional grievance going back almost a century and a half. So long as the issue remains outstanding, the goal of reconciliation and constitutional harmony, recognized in s. 35 of the Charter and underlying s. 31 of the Manitoba Act, remains unachieved. The ongoing rift in the national fabric that s. 31 was adopted to cure remains unremedied. The unfinished business of reconciliation of the Métis people with Canadian sovereignty is a matter of national and constitutional import.

–*Manitoba Metis Federation v. Canada*, paragraph 140, from Jean Teillet and Jason Madden, "*Manitoba Metis Federation v. Canada (Attorney General)*: Understanding the Supreme Court of Canada's Decision," 11, file:///C:/Users/Kel's%20LeNovo/Downloads/909.pdf.

Conclusion

The Métis Nation's Homeland history is a legacy of Métis families resiliently caring for each other, unified in the celebration of their culture and many diverse traditions. As the key stories in Métis history are revealed, their value for their communities, networks, and kin across the Homeland becomes clear. Their resistance against Canada's attempt to control their Nation is a legacy of determination to protect their families, homes, and lands.

Figure 87. Métis family and dogs in front of a log house, Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan, Canada, Department of the Interior/Library and Archives Canada/PA-044552.

Métis have always known who they are and have always known their own Homeland. They have expressed and proudly celebrated their history and identity through a variety of stories and traditions. As the first distinct generations of Métis families formed, Métis valued their family relationships and kin across the Homeland. Their relationships impacted their economic leadership through the fur trade. Métis who travelled and traded across the land and waterways established and maintained extensive trade routes that continue to connect Canadians today.

The foundational history of the Métis Nation's era of buffalo hunts unified Métis as they continued to build their Nation. Coming together under the infinity flags to resist Canada's attempts at control in the early 1800s was fundamental in Métis history. That unity in the Nation was essential to the formation of their distinct provisional governments during the Resistances of 1869–70 and 1885.

Figure 88. Métis Nation flag, Photo courtesy of Rupertsland Institute, 2017.

Figure 89. Métis students remembering the sacrifices of their ancestors at the Batoche Memorial Site, 2017. Photo courtesy of Rupertsland Institute, 2017.

Despite centuries lacking in respectful acknowledgement in their relationship with Canadians and the Government of Canada, Métis have resiliently endured systemic dispossession and displacement. Families have given everything to support and strengthen one another in ways available to them. Though it was once necessary for many to hide their culture and heritage to save their children from racism and discrimination, Métis families have resurged and re-strengthened their communities and Nation in more recent history.

Figure 90.2 Métis gather annually to remember Louis Riel's life and commitment to the Métis Nation. This group gathered for the commemorative walk in Alberta. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

This powerful expression of resilience and passion in caring for their families has been an important part of the Métis Nation's restoration. Métis people are unified in their collective gathering and celebration of their history and traditions. They are boldly sharing the truth about the many injustices they have endured in the discriminatory, assimilative system set up by Canada. Métis continue to rise, among the generations of Homeland Heroes, to advocate for the rights, freedom, and safety of their families.

Figure 91. In honour of their commitment to renewing a nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship, Métis Nation of Alberta President Audrey Poitras and the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, signed the Consultation Agreement in 2018.
Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

Many of the stories shared about the Métis have relied on misinformed, inaccurate ideas about who they are. Limiting word choices, one-sided narratives, and racially biased ideas have permeated many of the stories that are shared about Métis today. Métis are telling their own true history today to help all people understand the rich contributions that supported the development of Canada.

For generations, thousands of Métis children have heard misinformed narratives about their identity and families and their Nation's history in schools. This resource invites educators to actively address that injustice by sharing Métis history from a Métis perspective. For Métis students, hearing the stories of their history from a place of strength will enable them to connect with their Nation and community in new ways and empower them to dream about their future as a Métis person. Empowering all students with the truth about the Métis Homeland History will equip them to imagine and create a future where they contribute to restoring and forming healthy, reconciled relationships with Métis.

Figure 92. Students learning about the fiddle.
Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

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