

# Métis in Alberta

Foundational Knowledge Theme



A publication of Rupertsland Institute



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Métis Foundational Knowledge Theme



**Rupertsland  
Institute**

A publication of  
Rupertsland Institute



Languages of Métis

Métis Culture & Traditions

Homeland History

Métis in Alberta

Métis Nation Governance

## Introduction to Métis in Alberta



Métis have known the land and waterways in what is known as “Alberta” today for generations before the provincial boundary lines were drawn. Métis families have been essential to the establishment of virtually all communities around Alberta throughout their history. Today, Métis live and work in almost every community in Alberta, as well as in distinct Metis Settlements.



*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](mailto:education@rupertsland.org)*



Rupertsland Institute (RI) 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 with 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 now 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. She is an award-winning educator with over 20 years of diverse classroom experience. 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 amiskwacyi-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.



Publisher: Rupertsland Institute  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
<https://www.rupertsland.org/>

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Library and Archives Cataloguing in Publications Data

MÉTIS IN ALBERTA: FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE THEMES

1. Métis People | 2. Indigenous | 3. Education | 4. Canada | 5. Reconciliation

Issued first in electronic formats.  
ISBN: 978-0-9881648-2-6 (online resource)

Cover Design: EA Designs  
Book Design: RLI Education Team  
Editors: RLI Education Team; President Audrey Poitras; Vice-President Daniel Cardinal; Brenda Bourque-Stratichuk;  
Karen Collins; Bev New; Cecil Bellrose; Marilyn Lizee; Norma Spicer; KMP and Associates

Front Cover Photos Courtesy of:  
Provincial Archives of Alberta, A16179.  
Métis Nation of Alberta  
Glenbow Museum, PA-2218-94  
RLI Education Team

Rupertsland Institute would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Alberta through a conditional grant with Alberta Education. The perspectives expressed in this publication are those of the authors and contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government of Alberta.



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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.

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 (RI) publication of Foundational Knowledge Themes from the Education Division. I would like to thank the RI 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 will 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 plays 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, RI has had huge success under the *MNA-GOA Framework Agreement*. RI 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 in all teacher's pedagogical approaches to incorporating Métis education in 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,

  
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 Vermilion 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.

There were several leaders and community members from the **Métis Nation of Alberta** that 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. The RCTL 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 in effort 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, Unterschultz/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, Unterschultz/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, Unterschultz/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 which span across a historic homeland. <sup>1</sup> 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 do not simplify 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 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 in the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century 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 reference 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 term used especially in the early 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to refer to Métis, describing the different ethnicities of their ancestry.



## Indian

A term introduced by Euro-Canadian settlers used to reference 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 references 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 reference 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 which 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. <sup>2</sup> Métis ancestry, history, culture, and languages are rooted in these lands.

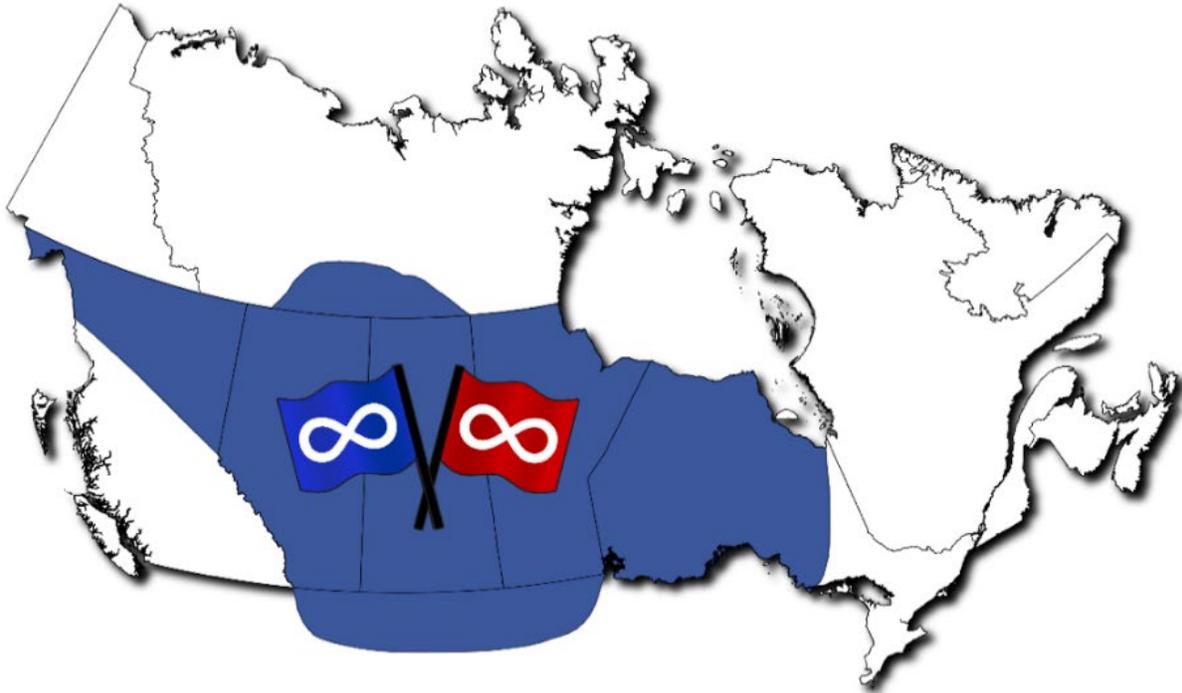
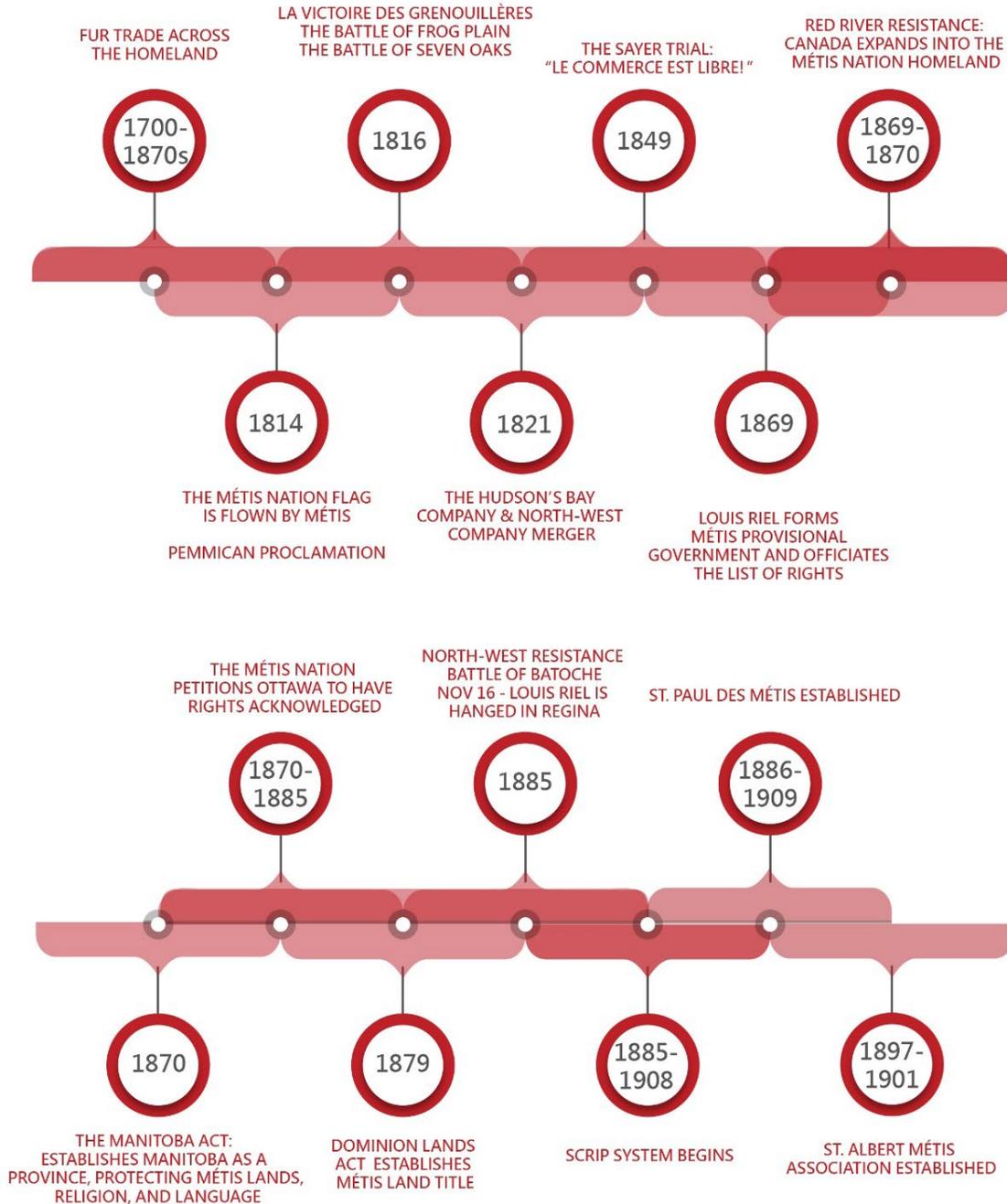


Figure 1 Métis Nation Homeland in Canada. Photo courtesy of the Métis Nation of Alberta, 2021.



## A Timeline of Métis History

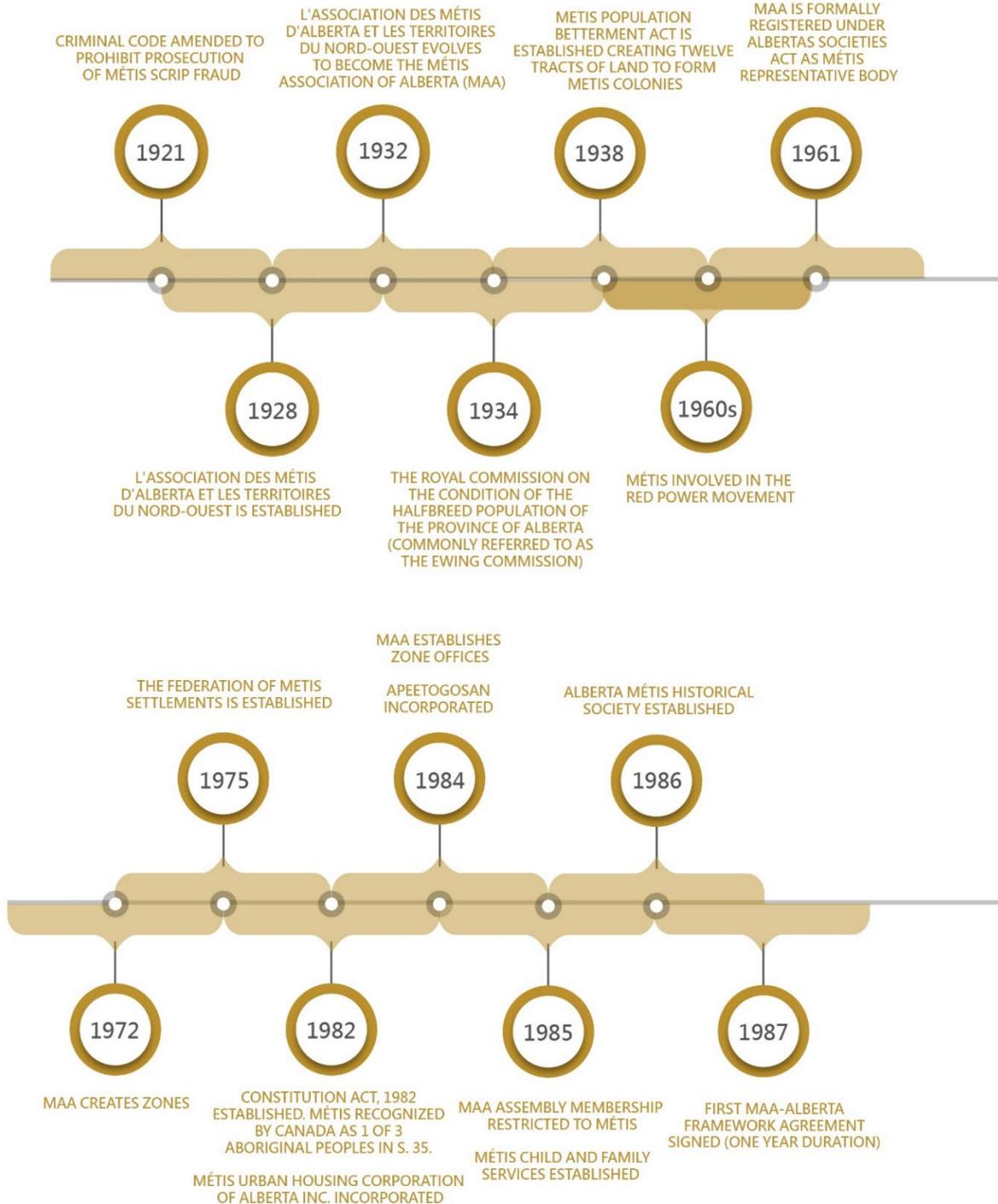
1800s





## A Timeline of Métis History

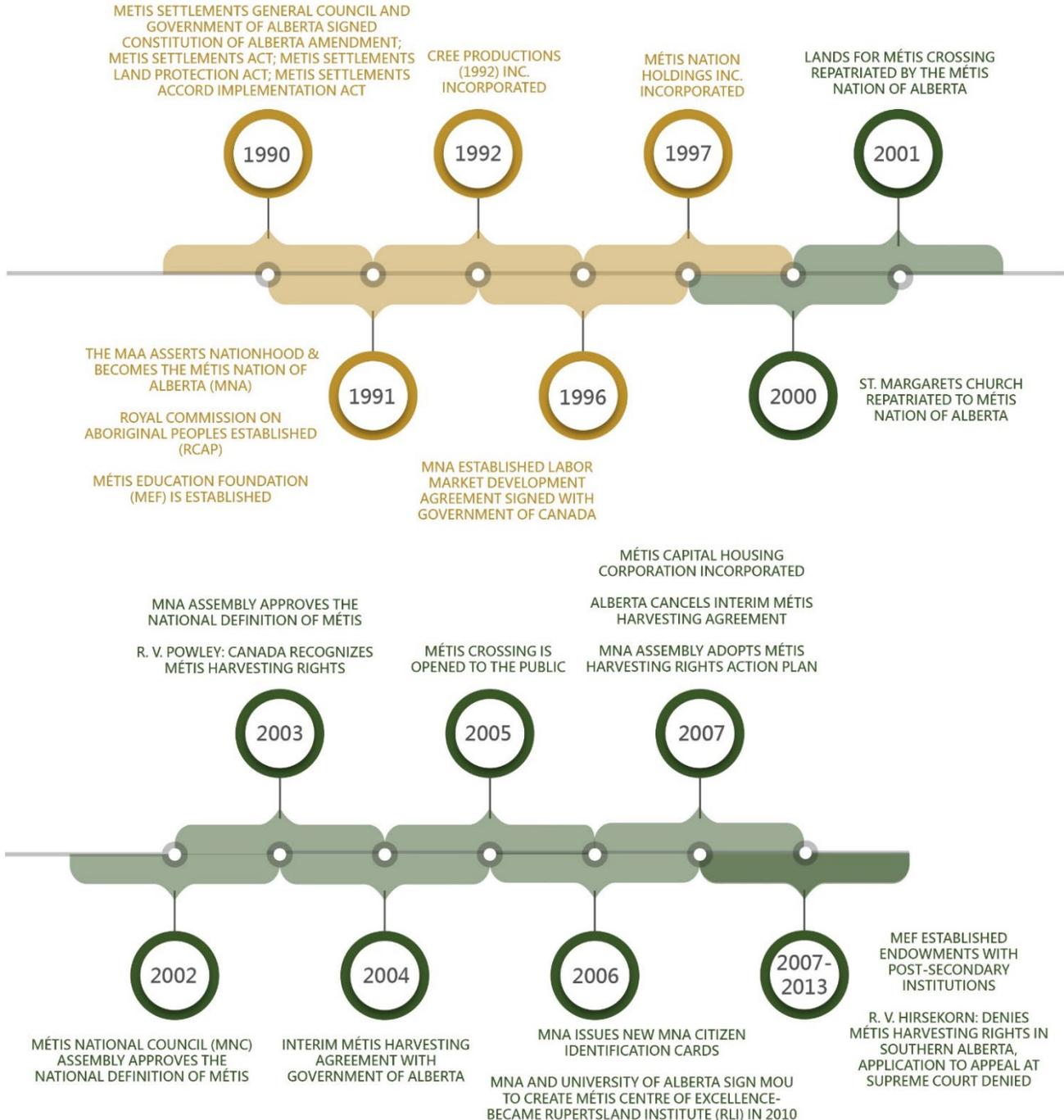
1900s





## A Timeline of Métis History

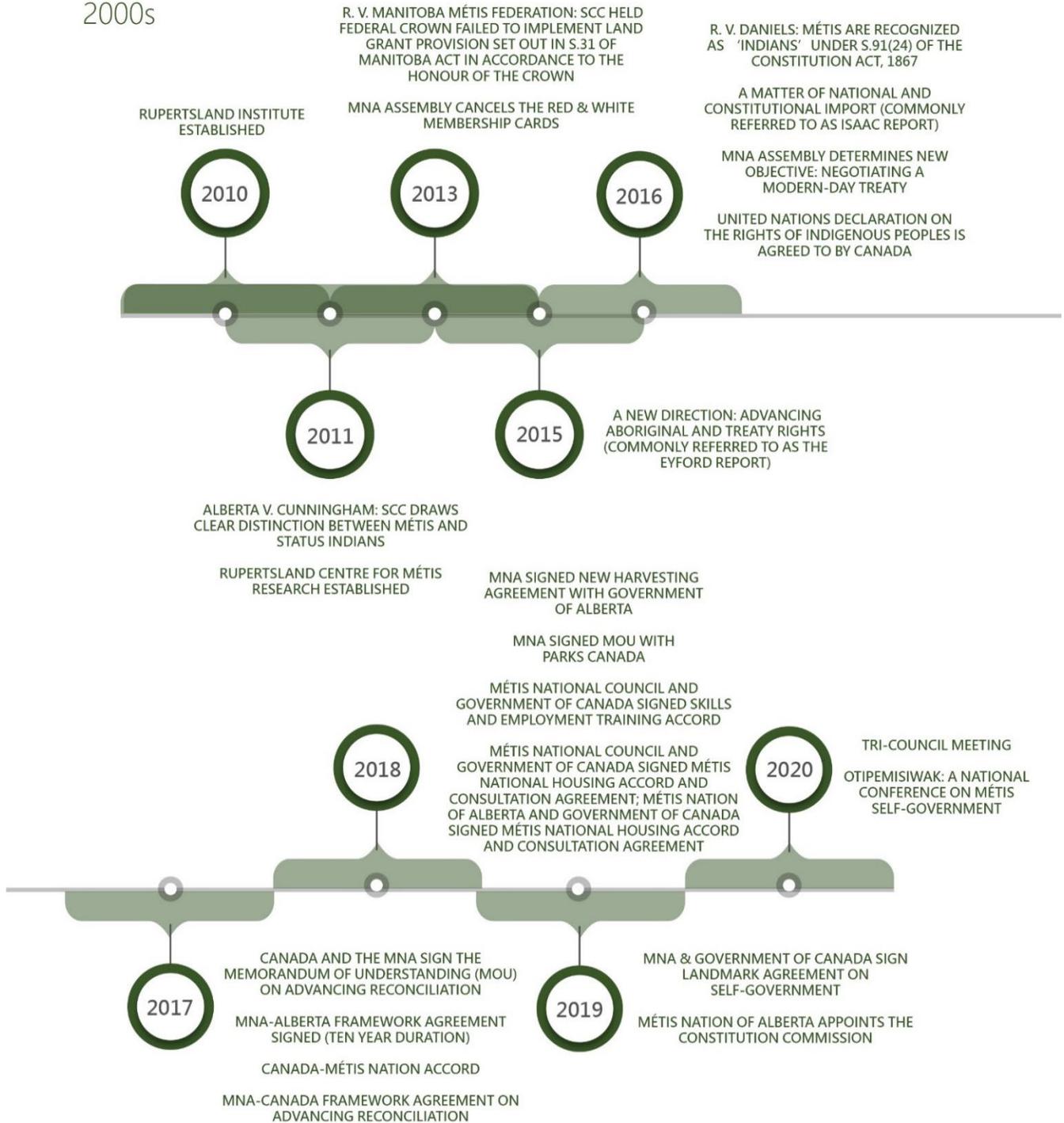
1990s-2000s





## A Timeline of Métis History

2000s





# Métis in Alberta 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, is 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.
Autonomy	A right or condition free from external control or influence; independence.
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.”
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.
Culture	Culture is the sum of the values, attitudes, customs and beliefs that distinguish one group of people from another. Métis culture, traditions, and history guide us today in all our endeavors as a Nation of people.
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. <sup>3</sup>
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.
Euro-Canadian	Describing people and groups who have ancestry and national affiliation primarily with European nations. This is primarily in reference to the settlers from European nations who have worked to colonize the land for the last two centuries.



Ewing Commission	The <i>Royal Commission on the Condition of the Halfbreed Population of the Province of Alberta</i> in 1934. Commonly known as the Ewing Commission, named after the primary commissioner, Justice Alfred Freeman Ewing, this inquiry led to the formation of the Metis Settlements.
Fiddle	A musical instrument. Fiddle is a community name of the violin when used to play Métis tunes.
First Nations	Defined by the Alberta Teachers' Association as "status and non-status Indian peoples in Canada." <sup>4</sup>
Framework Agreement	An agreement between parties that recognizes that the parties have come to an agreement on some issues, however 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. <sup>5</sup>
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.
Halfbreed	A racially biased and derogatory term used especially in the early 18 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> centuries to refer to people of mixed heritage, often describing their Indigenous and European ancestries.
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.
Historical North-West	This is the name of the land that Métis knew as their Homeland. It references land North and West of Montreal, including much of what is recognized as the Métis Homeland today.
Hivernant	A term of French language origin essentially translating to 'wintering'.
Homeland	The area known by individuals, communities, and nations as being home to their ancestors.



Hunting	One harvesting practice, 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	<p>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.</p> <p>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)).</p>
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.
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.
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.
Manitou Sakahikan	A Cree term, translated by most as meaning God's Lake or Spirit Lake. The name is first found in writing on a map expressed as "Lake Manitou" in 1801. This lake is most commonly known as Lac Ste Anne on contemporary Alberta maps.



## 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.”<sup>6</sup>

## Metis Population Betterment Act (1938)

This legislation allowed for 12 tracts of land, to be identified through a series of Government of Alberta 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.

## Mission

Refers to specific buildings or gathering places, established to do religious or charitable work in an area. People who work and live in the community of the mission buildings are often called missionaries. In Catholic churches, these are often priests and nuns. Methodist churches also had missions.

## Mobility

The movement of Métis across the Homeland is at the heart of the Métis experience.

## Networking

The process of interacting with others to build economic, professional, or social relationships.

## 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.

## North-West Mounted Police

A Canadian police force established in 1873 to establish and maintain order and authority in the North-West Territories. This group became the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in 1920.



Numbered Treaties	A series of 11 historic agreements, which are treaties, that were made in rapid succession over a short period of time from 1871 to 1921 between First Nations peoples and the Crown.
Oral Transmission	Communication wherein language, knowledge, art, ideas, and cultural material is received, preserved, and transmitted orally from one generation to another.
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 behaviors.
Pilgrimage	A journey, often undertaken for religious reasons, in which one embarks on a search for new or expanded meaning about oneself, others, nature, or a higher good.
Portaging	The practice of carrying boats and goods over land, either around an obstacle in a river, or between two bodies of water.
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." <sup>7</sup>
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 Red River area invented this during the fur trade.
Repatriation	The process of returning an asset or an item of symbolic value to its rightful owner or place of origin.
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.
Road Allowance	A plot of crown land set aside for future development of roads.



## Road Allowance People or Communities

The Métis who 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 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

The capacity 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.

## 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.<sup>12F12F</sup> 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.

### Township

A name for the way the Government of Canada divided the land. Townships are square sections of land with 9.7 kilometers, or 6 miles, per side. One township contained 36 sections.

### Township System

This is the system of hiring land surveyors to divide land into square sections for distribution. Canada applied this system after the passing of the Homestead Act in 1872. The township system did not guarantee access to water, wood, and farmland. Homes were also more likely to be built farther away from each other.

### Traditions

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.

### 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

Throughout every generation, **Métis** families have gathered together, celebrating life, building **community** economies, and strengthening the Métis Nation in the province known today as “Alberta.” There are over sixty gathering places that Métis call home in Alberta, each with a distinct Métis historical presence and foundation. <sup>8</sup> Through family connections, **storytelling**, and celebrations of their **culture** and **traditions**, Métis across the **Homeland** have remained unified. Their communities have been resilient amidst continual **displacement, dispossession**, and mistreatment by **Euro-Canadian settlers** and **governments** since the mid to late 1800s. Métis **resilience** has been, and still is, foundational for the successes of the Métis Nation and its communities in Alberta today.

Introduction	1
Métis in Alberta Communities Map	2
Métis Living Values and Distinct Experiences	3-6
Re-learning the History of Alberta	7-8
Twelve Métis Stories in Alberta	9- 61
Metis Settlements in Alberta	62-71
Métis Life in Alberta Today	72
Conclusion	73

Métis in Alberta today continue to live and work in distinct **Metis Settlements** and virtually every community in Alberta. In this document, authentic stories will be shared to give educators a glimpse into the enduring history and vibrant community life of the Métis. There are Métis stories in every community in the province. It is important that Métis students and families have a collective understanding of their history to share with others. This document features a collection of historical and contemporary stories from featured Métis gathering places. These highlighted communities were chosen by a selection of Métis community members from around the province. <sup>9</sup>

Fort Chipewyan - Lac La Biche  
St. Paul des Métis - Victoria Settlement/Pakan  
Buffalo Lake & Tail Creek – Calgary  
Lac Ste. Anne - St. Albert  
Grouard - Lesser Slave Lake area  
Fort Vermilion & Buttertown – Peace River

The stories from the communities in this document are chosen with the intent to empower educators with the knowledge and language required to connect meaningfully with Métis in their area. This information is not meant to replace the experience of hearing Métis tell their own history and life today; rather, they are meant to encourage educators to learn about the Métis in their area.

Consider: Which Métis communities are near your school community?



# Métis in Alberta Communities Map

This map illustrates the locations of the twelve featured Métis stories shared in this resource, alongside a list of over sixty historic Métis communities and the eight current Metis Settlements in Alberta.

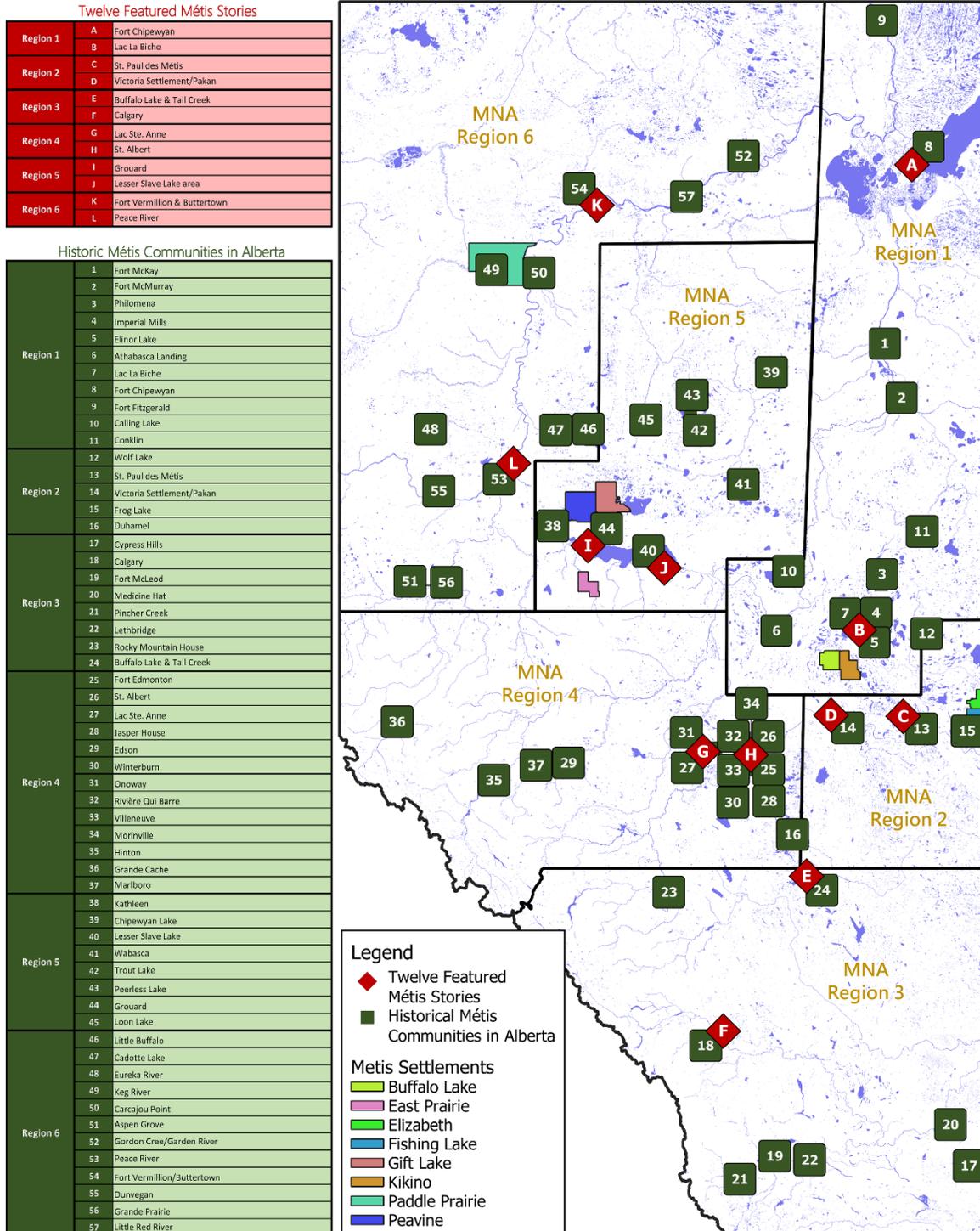


Figure 2. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.



## Métis Living Values and Distinct Experiences

Métis stories are illustrations of Métis **values** experienced collectively amongst the different Métis communities in terms of Métis culture, traditions, and ways of being. Core Métis values are important expressions of the principles that unify Métis regardless of location, historically and today. Consider how these values appear as the histories and contemporary stories about Métis life through the generations are shared.

Community, Networking, & Kinship

Traditional Stories

Mobility & Adaptability

Resilience

### Community, Networking, & Kinship

Community, **networking**, and **kinship** are values that collectively reflect the way Métis **traditions** and cultural practices celebrate, serve, and strengthen the Métis family. Placing value in relationships ensures that Métis families across the Homeland were unified and strong. Strength in families leads to strength in networking in entrepreneurship. The histories that are explored within this document illustrate the important realities of Métis kinship throughout the Homeland, as well as the strategic economic relationships that Métis have established throughout the generations.

### Traditional Stories

"Learning history through textbooks is not enough . . . It is important for students to learn by hearing stories of the past. . . . Stories help to create empathy and engage students, giving them an opportunity to see things from another perspective."

—Norma Spicer, personal communication with RCTL, July 24, 2019.

Métis **identity**, history, and traditions are an expression of values embedded in the stories that are shared among Métis families.<sup>10</sup> Authentic stories that are grounded in common traditional values help to contribute to a positive sense of self for Métis students and families. It is important to reflect on the strength of the Métis when reading the information shared in this document.

### Mobility & Adaptability

Métis families across the Homeland have shared the value of **mobility** for generations. Mobility refers to the building of good relations and celebration of stories while visiting and working together across the Homeland.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 3. Rupertsland Institute has mobile offices to support employment, training, and other services for Métis in all areas of Alberta. Parked next to it at a Métis gathering is a Red River Cart, a historical invention used by Métis. Photo by Rupertsland Institute, 2017.





For generations, Métis have developed a network of relations through traditional practices and paid seasonal work. Being situated together physically is the heart of Métis community.

Emile Blyan, from Elizabeth Settlement, spoke about the tradition of mobility through the seasonal routes for work, visiting relations, and celebrating faith traditions:

1958 is the first time I went to [work the sugar beets farm]. . . . There was a lot of people out there that time... from all over, Saskatchewan, northern Alberta, western Alberta. A lot of people met their wives there, or their boyfriends, girlfriends, you know. . . . Around the middle of May, they start to sprout, those sugar beets eh, that's when you thin them out...There was a lot of people from [Elizabeth]. . . . Not all families in the Settlement [would go], but a few families here and there. . . . Sugar beets were a crop, so you knew by the middle of May, it was gonna be [ready]. . . . [W]e'd just work for that one farmer. . . for May-June, then we came back to Lac Ste Anne, that was it, then we didn't go back [home] 'til middle of July. . . . Then after that there was a period of waiting time 'till harvest time again, that won't be till end of August. . . . A lot of people went every year. . . .

—Emile and Edna Blyan, Karen Collins, personal communication with RCTL, September 29, 2020.

**Mobility and adaptability** are highlighted in every community story, and are featured in these two topics: Métis Leadership in the North-West Territories Economy and Hivernant/Wintering Life.

### Métis Leadership in the North-West Territories Economy

The Métis, in many ways, facilitated the economy of the historic North-West with the arrival of Euro-Canadian traders. Some Métis worked closely with trade partners among both **First Nations** and European settler traders, including the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the North West Company (NWC), while others worked as winterers and **freemen**. Métis kinship connections and community movements across the Homeland made them strong contributors to the global fur trade economy between the late 1700s and the early 1900s.

Métis leaders and their role in the North-West Territories economy is looked at more closely on page 12.

### Hivernant/Wintering Life

**Hivernant** (say: he-vair-nant) is a term of French-language origin that essentially means “wintering.” It was a part of a distinct way of life. Métis communities had winter gathering places across the Homeland, often called “wintering settlements” or “hivernant villages,” where families would return in the winter seasons to rest, pray, celebrate with their community, and do business with kin. Many of the communities identified in this document are known by Métis to be prominent historical family gathering places.

Métis hivernant/wintering life is looked at more closely on page 28.



## Resilience

Though many of the stories in Canada's history tell of Métis as a defeated people, the resilience of the Métis Nation is well-illustrated in its community histories. Métis have had to endure many hardships throughout their collective displacement and dispossession by the Euro-Canadian settlers and provincial and federal governments. The Métis have maintained traditional values in both their history and contemporary life today. The histories explored here will give insight into the persistence and resilience of Métis.

Displacement: forced population movement

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. This may involve coercive, extra-legal, or questionable means

—Alisdair Rogers, Noel Castree, and Rob Kitchin, *A Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868>.

Educators must be aware of the historical ideas and impacts that Euro-Canadian settlers and governments have had on Métis society to better understand the Métis community in Alberta today.

Displacement and Dispossession are exemplified by the following distinct Métis experiences:

### Métis Experiences as "Squatters"

Métis families were forced from their homes, having their lands and communities displaced for over 150 years. As the Euro-Canadian government worked to claim Indigenous lands, they did not recognize the rights of Métis to live in the homes they had known for generations and labelled them as **squatters**. Some of these people were recognized as living on **road allowances**, however many of the squatting experiences were on Crown lands claimed for other reasons.

Métis experiences as "squatters" are looked at more closely on page 13.

### Road Allowance Experiences

Road allowance communities consisted of Métis that were dispossessed of their homes and land by the arrival of Euro-Canadian settlers and families. Métis families who experienced this displacement through the implementation of colonial government policies often found refuge on land that was designated by Euro-Canadian governments for future railway or road construction known as "road allowance." This is how the many displaced Métis families living in these areas became known as road allowance communities.

Métis road allowance experiences are looked at more closely on pages 14–15.

### Scrip Experiences

When Canadian land speculators arrived in the historic North-West, they sought to remove any claim that **Indigenous** peoples had to land. The Canadian government acknowledged Métis land claims through a system called **North-West Half-Breed Commissions**, also known as the **scrip** system. Métis individuals were given a scrip coupon to a quarter section of land, often far from their home, in exchange for their Indigenous land rights. As will be made clear later, the system was poorly established, easily subverted by settlers and allowed land speculators to access land through unscrupulous means.

Métis scrip experiences are looked at more closely on pages 23–24.



### Métis River Lots and Township Systems

Métis families would mark out long, narrow lots of land along riverways to ensure that each Métis family had access to water and a variety of resources to care for their families and one another. When the Euro-Canadian government claimed ownership of the land, they surveyed and divided it using a township system that divided land into square sections. While some **Métis river lots** were surveyed respectfully, most Métis did not have their land recognized and were dispossessed of their homes by the imposed system.

Métis experiences with river lots and **township systems** are looked at more closely on page 40.

### Residential School Experiences

The Government of Canada and Canadian society were working to control the land in a way that they desired. One key strategy was to assimilate Indigenous children into the Euro-Canadian community by dispossessing and displacing them from their families, homes, and cultures. Métis children were taken to Euro-Canadian schools, where they learned Euro-Canadian culture and language, while having their own languages and culture stripped from them. In many cases, the children were abused and subjected to malnourishment. These negative experiences have led to many Métis suffering from intergenerational trauma.

Métis **residential school** experiences in Alberta are looked at more closely on pages 52–54.



Figure 4. Nuns and students posed outside the convent, ca. 1924. Photo courtesy of Lac La Biche Mission Historical Society.

### Métis "Sixties Scoop" Experiences

For several generations, Canadian governments and churches believed that Indigenous families were incapable of caring for themselves and that their children should therefore be assimilated into Euro-Canadian families.<sup>12</sup> From 1951 through to the 1980s, Métis children were targeted, removed from their families, and 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 Métis children grew up in safe, loving adopted homes, many experienced abuses in all its forms and were used for labour by their adopted families. Very few of the children scooped from their Métis families experienced opportunities to learn about their Métis heritage, culture, and traditions.

Métis Sixties Scoop experiences in Alberta are looked at more closely on pages 55 and 56.



## Re-learning the History of Alberta

Like most Indigenous histories, Métis stories in Alberta have been “‘painted over’ by mainstream interpretations of official history.”<sup>13</sup> The history of Métis communities is best learned by listening to Métis family stories, reading the stories that they have written down, and re-reading historical documents carefully in search of the Métis who might not be recognized.

It is important that educators be prepared to listen to Métis tell their own story, rather than prescribe Métis history and contemporary stories with narratives commonly shared. For example, Métis history in Alberta is typically minimized to simply “being fur traders.” Métis history is not summarized only in the fur trade, and, in fact, Métis are still creating history today.



Figure 5. Leon Hunter at Métis Crossing sharing about Métis history and identity. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.



Today, Métis continue to advocate for and empower their community by sharing family stories and addressing historical and contemporary injustices. When Métis express their stories orally and in writing, they are leading **self-governance** initiatives and sharing Canadian history from a Métis perspective.

Figure 6. President Audrey Poitras stands in front the Métis Nation of Alberta flag. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

### What Histories Have You Heard?

Educators working in Alberta have been entrusted to act as a bridge by linking students to Indigenous and non-Indigenous community history.

As educators encounter stories of Métis in history, they are invited to reflect on which narratives have been shared and which have not.

Reading and engaging with Métis stories shared in this resource will enable educators to better understand the Métis role in establishing what is now the province of Alberta. These are the stories and history that many Métis students and educators may be connected to. Educators are encouraged to re-examine the local Métis history in their area and talk to Métis to learn more.



Figure 7. Métis family celebrating at a Métis function. Photo courtesy of Cindy Ziorio, Métis community member, personal communication with RCTL, August 2020.



Figure 8. Children learning to bead with Métis teachers at Métis Crossing. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

Educators that take the time to rediscover the historical and contemporary stories of Métis in Alberta will be better equipped to share Métis **perspectives** with their students. It is the goal of this document to empower educators with experiences such as stories, community connections, and critical historical reflections that are essential for preparing students to build strong, meaningful relationships with their communities.

### These Stories Are an Invitation to Learn More

This resource is not designed to be the only collection of local Métis histories in Alberta. A comprehensive collection telling specific Métis histories could be created only by each individual community. This resource is a tour that invites educators to increase their foundational knowledge about Métis history and will support meaningful engagement with Métis people and communities. Learning and sharing authentic Métis stories has the power to improve education for all students and families.



Figure 9. Mrs. Colin Fraser, unknown, and Mrs. John Sutherland. Ladies, Fort Chipewyan, 1899. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-949-56.



Figure 10. Kikino Northern Lights Junior Dancers give jigging lessons at the Métis in the Mountains Asihawak Festival, 2014. Photo courtesy of *Pincher Creek Voice*, <https://www.pinchercreekvoice.com/2014/07/metis-in-mountains-asihawak-festival.html>.



# Twelve Métis Stories in Alberta

In this section, educators will encounter twelve historical and contemporary Métis stories from the province now recognized as Alberta. Before the colonial government drew lines around what would become Alberta, Métis families had a network of gathering spaces in this region intimately connected to their relations across the Homeland. These twelve stories were identified by Métis community members as gathering spaces dense with Métis life throughout history.<sup>14</sup> Most communities remain prominent gathering spaces filled with Métis lifeways, whereas others are intricately connected to other communities that Métis call home today. These twelve stories tell of just a few of these gathering spaces that illustrate Métis values and lifeways.

This resource is not designed to be the primary source of Métis stories for educators. It is meant to support educators by providing background knowledge, language, and perspectives from Métis communities to help them connect with Métis in their area. These stories do not include every detail that Métis communities know about their own historical gathering places, nor do they tell the histories of all Métis in Alberta. These stories have been chosen to empower educators to better connect and honour the Métis families and community members in their region. Métis in Alberta are unified and diverse, so educators are encouraged to engage with Métis in their area to learn their stories.



Figure 11. Maxime Ladouceur and other Indigenous men on a scow at Athabasca Landing. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta, A20696.

Figure 12. In 1874, this Manitoba Maple was planted by Métis leaders Laurent and Eleanor Garneau on their River Lot in present-day Edmonton. At 143 years old, the tree was wrapped with a Métis sash at a ceremony in 2018 with 100 people shortly before it reached the end of its lifespan and was removed. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.



Fort Chipewyan	10–12
Lac La Biche	16–18
St. Paul des Métis	19–22
Victoria Settlement/Pakan	25–27
Buffalo Lake & Tail Creek	29–32
Calgary	33–35
Lac Ste. Anne	36–39
St. Albert	41–45
Lesser Slave Lake Area	46–48
Grouard	49–51
Fort Vermilion & Buttertown	55–57
Peace River	58–59



## Fort Chipewyan

Fort Chipewyan was one of the first established gathering spaces of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in what would become Alberta. Métis identity began to evolve in the communities here even before the **Red River** colony was established.<sup>15</sup> The community in Fort Chipewyan has always been complex and plural.<sup>16</sup>

For generations, Métis have been leaders in the wage labour of the fur trade that took place in and through Fort Chipewyan. The families took up a variety of economic activities. Some were regular employees of a post or **mission**, while others were successful farmers, trappers, tradesmen, and hunters.<sup>17</sup> Métis in Fort Chipewyan were essential to the fur trade economy.

When Euro-Canadian explorer Roderick McKenzie came through this northern area in the late 1700s, he found a bustling, diverse gathering place for Métis and First Nations. In 1788, he established a NWC trading post, working to foster good trade relations amongst the Métis, First Nations, and Euro-Canadian traders.<sup>18</sup> The post was named after the Chipewyan First Nations people who first lived in the area.



Figure 13. Roman Catholic Mission, Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, 1913.  
Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives NA-1561-4.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate founded a mission in the area in 1851, followed by the Anglicans in 1874. Métis faith traditions laid the groundwork for Roman Catholicism in the area, as many of the missionaries who came to Fort Chipewyan came directly from Red River.<sup>19</sup> In 1898, the **North-West Mounted Police** joined and established a post in Fort Chipewyan as well.



Figure 14. These Métis women are of the Wylie family, which called Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, home. L-R back row: Emma Wylie; unknown. L-R front row: Mary Anne Wylie; Annie Wylie; Liza Wylie. 1899.  
Photo courtesy of Glenbow Museum, NA-949-57.

In 1899, although Métis were essential contributors to the community in the region, only First Nations had their land recognized with the signing of **Treaty 8**. The government would not negotiate treaties with the Métis, because they saw them as individual “**half-breeds**,” rather than a community of Métis families. Instead, Métis in the Fort Chipewyan region were offered scrip, a coupon that one Métis individual could trade in for land or money. The Métis experiences with scrip are reviewed more closely on pages 29–30 of this document.



## Métis in Fort Chipewyan Today

Métis remain a prominent community in the Fort Chipewyan area today. After two centuries living in this area, Métis families continue to gather and celebrate Métis traditions such as jigging, playing the **fiddle**, beading, fishing, and working the **trapline**.<sup>20</sup>

“I was born in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta and raised along the Athabasca River at Mile 64. Being Métis, I want to maintain my history and keep our traditional knowledge alive to share with others . . . . My father, Edmond Ducharme, was born at Lac La Biche mission in Alberta. The Ducharme family made their living from trapping, hunting, and fishing. Growing up in our small family, when our work was done, we would enjoy my father’s fiddling. Edmond was a true Métis. His grandfather, Antoine Ducharme, was a Michif, French-Cree Métis who came from Winnipeg, Manitoba. He homesteaded on the south shore of Lac La Biche at a place that later became known as Plamondon.”

—Sherri Labour and Barb Hermanson, “Barb Hermanson: Her Story,” Fort Chipewyan Métis, Local 125. Sponsored by Teck Resources Limited and Silverbirch Energy Corporation. June 2011.

In the 1930s, Fort Chipewyan was designated as a Canadian national historic site in recognition of its founding in 1788. This designation also celebrates it as a historical centre of the northern trade and once one of the richest trading posts in North America. This commemoration of Fort Chipewyan as both a national historic site and as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site in 1938 recognizes the history of the Métis and their work in the region.

In 2015, Fort Chipewyan Métis (Local 125) community collaborated with the Integral Ecology Group (IEG) to study the implications of development for the community’s ability to sustain their cultural practices. Since the 1960s, the cumulative uptake of land for natural resource extraction and related development has had a rapid and profound impact on the traditional lands and culture of the Métis in north-eastern Alberta.<sup>21</sup> Métis were leaders in the research and explored four issues: how their community’s traditional values have changed; how culture is expressed today; the key factors that have led to these changes; and what Fort Chipewyan Métis (Local 125) members believe is necessary to support their culture now and into the future.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 15. Fort Chipewyan Church and former residential school. Photo courtesy of Red Deer Advocate, <https://www.reddeeradvocate.com/life/life-in-a-northern-town/>.



The Fort Chipewyan Métis who participated in the study shared several activities that they consider an important part of Métis tradition and identity and that continue to be exercised today. These include activities related to cultural arts, such as jigging; square dancing; beading; and playing the fiddle, guitar, and accordion. Some Métis men wear **sashes** on special occasions, and some Métis women have begun wearing the sash over the shoulder in a celebration of their identity. For some Métis in the area, their sash's colours represent the life cycle of the Métis people and are customized to reflect a family's or individual's history and experiences.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 16. The Métis in Fort Chipewyan continue to be harvesters; they utilize boats for travel and recreation and to provide for their families. They are an unmistakable part of the Fort Chipewyan region and have been in Fort Chipewyan since before Canada was a country. They continue to exercise their rights in their traditional territory. Photo courtesy of Three Nations Energy, <https://www.3ne.ca/about-3ne/fort-Chipewyan-Métis-association/>.

### Keys to Upholding Métis Culture in Fort Chipewyan

Governance; Identity and Cultural Resilience; Reclamation; Cultural Heritage and Language Retention; Land-based Employment; Documentation of Cultural Heritage; Cumulative Effects and Land-use Planning Research; Further Data Collection and Monitoring.

Figure 17. The above lists some of the mitigation strategies that the Fort Chipewyan Métis stated are key to upholding their culture in the region. As stated in Local 125 Cultural Impact Assessment, <https://isaac-aiec.gc.ca/050/documents/p65505/119096E.pdf>, 90.

## Métis Leadership in the North-West Territory Economy

The story about Métis often goes that they are people of the fur trade. The Métis facilitated the economy of the **historic North-West** in many ways. Some Métis worked closely with trade partners in both First Nations and European settler communities, while others worked as winterers and freemen. Métis throughout Alberta played an essential role in the success of both the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. Amidst the various tensions with the companies, Métis were able to achieve their political and economic goals as they operated in ways to best serve their families.<sup>24</sup>

The contributions Métis made to the economy include:

- hunting
- trapping
- labour
- freighting goods
- carpentry
- farming & ranching
- dog sledding
- land navigation
- building carts and boats
- translating between trade partners
- working at trading posts



## Métis Experiences as "Squatters"

Generations of Métis families have experienced displacement and the dispossession of their homes at the hands of Euro-Canadian, and eventually Canadian, development. After being unfairly displaced, Métis families would make their homes on unoccupied land claimed by the Euro-Canadian government as Crown land. Families who built communities in these areas were 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 governments.<sup>25</sup>

These are usually identified as road allowance experiences, though not all squatting experiences were on lands set aside for road allowances. Métis share these communities in memory today. One example is evident in the three areas known to Métis as "Moccasin Flats" in different regions. A contemporary example is of a Métis family who has known the Kathleen Lands as home for generations in northern Alberta. They were labelled as "squatters" on Crown land until they finally had their right to the land recognized by the government in 2005.

The Métis communities around the province know where their families and friends were ousted and forced to live as squatters on Crown land. The Métis Nation is working to advocate for justice where families are still experiencing displacement today.

### Squatting Métis Communities

Moose Lake

Kathleen Lands

Moccasin Flats, Lac La Biche

Moccasin Flats, Sundre

Moccasin Flats, Fort McMurray

Beaver Hills

—This is just a small list of a few of the Métis communities that were labelled as "squatters." List provided in personal communication with Métis Nation of Alberta Review Group, September 16, 2020; Emile and Edna Blyan, September 29, 2020; and Doreen Bergum, October 7, 2020.

"The Mary and Ambroise Dumont family lived on what was called the road allowance. Crown land in Alberta between the ditch and the Red Deer River. We were known as squatters, living off the land. And the ruling back then, was if you lived on this land for ten years, you could claim this land as squatter's rights. I can't remember if it was two weeks or two months before we could claim the land, and a townsperson did not want us to live there and claim the land, so he tried to burn our house down. It was then my parents bought a schoolhouse, and moved it on an acre of land, built it into a home for their family. The funny part of this is there was still the maps and the chocolate bars on the corners, and the blackboards were still on the walls. They had so many children they had to buy a schoolhouse."

—Doreen Bergum, personal communication with RCTL, October 9, 2020.



## Road Allowance Experiences

The road allowance period is one piece of a much larger picture of Métis displacement and dispossession. Sections of Crown land called “road allowances” were used, or intended to be used, for the creation of roads. The Métis who squatted on these plots of land came to be known as the “**road allowance people.**” Although road allowance communities are commonly thought to have occurred solely on the prairies in the early 20th century, road allowance communities continued to exist into the 1980s. The road allowance families lived in uncertainty, never safe from the possibility of being evicted once more to make way for development.

The Métis living on road allowance lands were among a racist settler society that socially marginalized them, creating a variety of challenges for Métis families, such as barriers to health care and employment. Many Métis children living in the road allowances and other squatting communities were also barred from attending local schools because the funding structure allowed only the children of landowners to attend.<sup>26</sup> In the eyes of the government, the Métis who resided in road allowance communities did not have the right to live on the land they resided on, meaning that their children were not allowed to attend school. Barred from education, the Métis became further stereotyped and dispossessed.

### Moccasin Flats, Fort McMurray

Moccasin Flats was a Métis road allowance community gathered in the area that would later become a suburb of Fort McMurray. As early as the 1960s, Moccasin Flats was imposed upon by Canadian infrastructure and construction in the area. The Métis who resided in the Moccasin Flats area were forcibly evicted from their homes due to the encroaching development of the oil sands industry and growth of Fort McMurray in the 1970s. The Town of Fort McMurray “collaborated with Northward Developments Ltd. (the subsidiary housing branch of Syncrude Canada Ltd.) to evict the Moccasin Flats families from their homes to build the River Park Glen housing tower and a proposed marina that was never built.”<sup>27</sup>



Michel Gladue, a Métis trapper who lived on the Snye with his wife, Christine, stated that he was born in the area and that “we have lived here so long we should hate to move now.”

—Quotation from Longley and Joly, *The Moccasin Flats Evictions*, 57.

Figure 18. Photograph of Michel Gladue, a Métis trapper. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives: PA-1599-366q-28.



In 1977, Mayor Chuck Knight told the press that the Moccasin Flats families were living on a public road allowance and sought their eviction.<sup>28</sup> The construction company built an 8-foot-tall fence around the community, which cut them off from the construction site but also blocked the road, preventing garbage trucks and other vehicles from getting through. They trespassed on the homes and in the community of the Métis who lived there, vandalizing, and throwing construction materials at their homes. The contractors and surrounding settler community made it so the Moccasin Flats families would suffer, demanding them to leave.<sup>29</sup> The eviction process played out in several stages, leading up to the demolition of the community in 1981.

By labelling the Métis families of Moccasin Flats as “squatters,” Fort McMurray used property law to disregard their rights as Indigenous peoples to the historical community of Moccasin Flats.<sup>30</sup> In order to justify their removal, their homes were described as “shacks” and “shanties” as a means to diminish the importance of the Métis residents.<sup>31</sup> The historical occupancy of the Métis at the Snye River was completely dismissed by Canadians in the area until recently.



Figure 19. The Demolition of Moccasin Flats. Vincent McDermott, "McMurray Métis confronts Scott on update for Moccasin Flats," *Fort McMurray Today*, October 29, 2019, <https://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/news/local-news/McMurray-metis-confronts-Scott-on-update-for-moccasin-flats>.

In commemoration of the devastating effects on the community due to the Moccasin Flats evictions, Mayor Don Scott issued a formal, public apology to the former residents of Moccasin Flats and Métis community in 2019. The next year, the Wood Buffalo Municipality unanimously approved the McMurray Métis' request to acquire 7.8 acres of land on MacDonald Island Park to build a Métis cultural centre.

The transfer of land in the area for a Métis cultural centre is one step the community of Fort McMurray has taken towards reconciling with the Moccasin Flats Métis and the surrounding community. In September 2020, construction began, with the hope of opening in the spring of 2022.<sup>32</sup>



## Lac La Biche

The area that would become Lac La Biche is one of historical and contemporary importance to Métis in Alberta. Métis families have been living and working along this section of the primary trading waterway of the Athabasca-Mackenzie watersheds and the Saskatchewan River Basin since as early as 1763.<sup>33</sup> The land in the area was ideal for **portaging**, earning the location its first name of “Portage La Biche.”<sup>a</sup> Portage La Biche, also known as the “Swampy Portage,” was part of one of three principal fur trade routes throughout the Métis Homeland.<sup>34</sup>

Métis have traversed through the area for many generations, so much so that it was first recognized as a significant gathering place for Métis by European traders and explorers in 1798. In an effort to establish a connection with the community of Métis, First Nations, and European traders that gathered in this area, David Thompson set up the first trading NWC post in the area in 1798, calling it “Red Deers Lake House.”<sup>35</sup> Shortly after, Peter Fidler arrived to build a trading post for the HBC, called “Greenwich House.”

Throughout the early 1800s, Métis families built their homes and lived in the region. Through family histories, and the records of passing through Euro-Canadian explorers, the Métis have been recognized as the first families in the region, working as farmers, hunters, trappers, fishers, and seasonal labourers for the trading companies.<sup>36</sup> It was the presence of these Métis families that continued to attract Euro-Canadian settlement.

### Some Generational Family Names from Lac La Biche

Ladouceur; Tremblay; Bourque; Lavallee;  
Pruden; Cardinal; Desjarlais; Bouchier

—This is a list of just some of the Métis families who played a role in establishing the Métis community in this region and in laying the foundations of Lac La Biche as it is known today. There are more Métis families not listed here that were leaders in making the community what it is today.

By the mid-1800s, Métis families sought out the Oblates, inviting them to establish a Catholic mission in the area.<sup>37</sup> In 1853, the mission Notre Dame des Victoires was established to serve the spiritual needs of many Métis and non-Métis families who had come to gather in the area.

[I]t is known that free traders who had moved into the area during the early 1800s stayed and formed the nucleus for permanent settlement.

—In many Euro-Canadian accounts of history, Métis are not recognized as Métis but as free traders; *Lac La Biche Chronicles: The Early Years*, 100–101.



Figure 20. Nuns and students posed outside the convent, 1924. Photo courtesy of Lac La Biche Mission Historical Society.

<sup>a</sup>Portaging is an essential part of the fur trader’s travel. When freighting trade goods or travelling between trade locations, it was sometimes faster to exit one waterway and carry the canoe and the goods to another waterway to keep heading in one direction.



By 1872, Lac La Biche was recognized as a well-established Métis community, with more than fifteen times the people in Fort Edmonton at that time.<sup>38</sup> The Oblates in the area also achieved two Alberta firsts in Lac La Biche: establishing a printing press and a water-powered sawmill.

Into the 1870s and 1880s, Métis across the Homeland were resisting the forces of colonial settlement. Métis resistance to **colonialism** sent ripples throughout the Homeland, impacting Euro-Canadian security and Métis everywhere. Both Métis and non-Métis families were struck with a fear of the potential impacts of violence on their community. Métis families who had helped establish the community of Lac La Biche did not want to participate in the resistance efforts that their kin to the east were making. At one point, during the most intense efforts, a group called the “St. Albert Riflemen” came to protect the families and Mission in Lac La Biche.



Figure 21. Métis Men in Lac La Biche, 1877. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta, A16179.

“Lac La Biche is a real center [for Métis].  
It's actually recognized as part of the  
linkage with Saskatchewan and Manitoba.”

—Paul Bercier, personal communication with RCTL, July 10, 2020.

When the most intense resistance efforts ceased after Métis had been attacked at Batoche, many families scattered around the Métis Homeland, some eventually joining their Métis community in Lac La Biche.

“The Métis in Lac La Biche have always been Otipemisiwak—the people who own themselves—they were entrepreneurial in spirit in the 1700's and today they continue the legacy of the freeman and are significant contributors to Alberta's economy.”

—Brenda Bourque-Stratichuk, personal communication with RCTL, July 14, 2020.

Lac La Biche continued to grow throughout the 20th century via Métis and non-Métis families. The arrival of the railway cemented Lac La Biche as a popular place for Canadian settlement by 1915.

Today, Lac La Biche remains an economic hub and home of a vibrant Métis community. Métis continue to play a key role in building up the community by sharing their history, culture, stories, and celebrations.<sup>39</sup>



## Métis in Lac La Biche Today

In Lac La Biche today, Métis remain amongst the prominent communities contributing to life in the area. Families continue to gather to remember and celebrate Métis history and culture.

Lac La Biche is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta's Region 1 Office, where Métis citizens and leaders work, meet, and provide services of all kinds to the Métis community.

Another building that remains important to Métis in Lac La Biche is the Mission. It remains on its original site in Lac La Biche. With its remarkably well-preserved heritage buildings, the mission was designated an Alberta Provincial Historic site in 1987 and a Canadian National Historic Site in 1989. The Lac La Biche Museum is another place where visitors can engage with and learn more about Métis history.<sup>40</sup>



Figure 22. Church and rectory with the convent in the background. Photo courtesy of Lac La Biche Mission, <https://www.laclabichemission.com/photo-gallery/present>.

"We work together with others—community members, students, teachers, families. We are here to provide the continuing generations with information [about] who they are (First Nation, Métis, French, English, etc.) and to fill in that gap where we as the Métis people need to be included in the dialogue and assembly of Alberta and, furthermore, Canada."

—Kelly Johnston, Métis educator in Lac La Biche, personal communication with RCTL, August 10, 2020.

Lac La Biche has a diverse population. The Métis are a distinct group of people, not grouped in with other Indigenous populations living in and around Lac La Biche. There is an active group of Métis citizens, and the town even has its own regional office.<sup>41</sup> Many of the Métis residing in Lac La Biche continue to practice traditional ways of life such as **trapping** and **harvesting**.



Figure 23. Jillian Ekeberg wearing a hat made of trapped fur, personal communication with RCTL, August 10, 2020.

Even within the Métis community,  
"there are many diverse Métis  
people residing in Lac La Biche."

—Jason Ekeberg, Region 3 Vice President, personal communication with RCTL, August 10, 2020.



## St. Paul des Métis

Métis experiences in St. Paul des Métis represent a powerful illustration of the dispossession and displacement they experienced at the hands of Euro-Canadian institutions and settlers.

In 1895, the Oblate missionary Albert Lacombe devised a plan called “A Philanthropic Plan to Redeem the Half-Breeds of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories” in an effort to help the Métis, whom he perceived as destitute.<sup>42</sup> It set out land on which Métis would live, governed by the Church as an agricultural colony, with an industrial school to “rehabilitate” the children. Rather than the Métis themselves being issued title to the land (a move that would have guaranteed those families a home base and some economic opportunity in the swiftly approaching agricultural economy), the Canadian government and Father Lacombe took the paternalistic approach. The Church would manage St. Paul des Métis on behalf of the Métis because, as Father Lacombe wrote when proposing the colony, “owing to their natural improvidence, they [the Métis] have wasted what they received.”<sup>43</sup>

Despite the patronizing discrimination they faced, many Métis families settled on the lands and established a thriving community filled with businesses and homesteads. An account written by Métis political leader and activist James Brady, whose account is substantiated by Métis community from the area today, serves as evidence of this prosperity, as it details the assets held by several Métis families residing in St. Paul des Métis.

In 1899, reports show that Métis families were asking for a school and were growing frustrated with the Church, which withheld money, tools, cattle, and other aids they had promised the Métis in exchange for their labour.<sup>44</sup> The persisting perception of the Métis by Church officials was that they were innately averse to and incapable of farming, despite the fact that many of the residents were actually quite prosperous.



Figure 24. Narcisse Cardinal in a horse-drawn cutter in St. Paul des Métis, Alberta. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-4584-8.

By 1895, three families had settled in the area: the households of Simon Desjarlais, Joseph Cardinal, and Pierre Desjarlais . . . Dieudonne Boudreau was among the first Métis pioneers in St. Paul des Métis. The first mercantile was opened by Charles Logan. By 1900, Elzear and Marguerite Poitras became “the proprietor of the first hotel and was widely known for welcoming homesteaders to the community.” Within a few years, the Garneau family formed a business centre, “where they operated a store, traded furs, managed a transportation company, and owned the first community hall.”

—Caleb Anacker, Tanya Fontaine, Megan Tucker, Pierre Lamoureux, Goddy Nzonji, Roy Missal, *Restoring the History of St. Paul des Métis*, 39–40, 45.



"When the colony was disbanded on April 10 of 1909, they were saying that the Métis were a failure, and the Roman Catholic Church did file a claim that the settlement had failed to adapt to agricultural life and yet, [. . .] Lawrence Garneau had four hundred cattle, a hundred head of horses, a chain of trading posts, timber birth, three sawmills, and a threshing machine. Why would he have a threshing machine? And Louis LaFrame, he had a hundred and 60 head of cattle and a threshing machine. [Jean] Larivierre, he had a hundred acres of cultivated land and John Ross had 125 head of cattle and the list just keeps going on. And an Edward Garneau, Alexander Garneau and John Garneau had property in the town or in the settlement of St. Paul des Métis."



Figure 25. Presbytery in St. Paul des Métis. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta, OB39388.

In addition to the experience Métis children were having, the Church began opening the land for Euro-Canadian settlers to squat in the Métis colony between 1906 and 1908.<sup>46</sup> One of these squatters, a French-Canadian named U. Fouquet, actually received permission from the Oblate priests to move into the area despite protests from the Métis sent to the Minister of the Interior. Father Lacombe argued that Fouquet would inspire the Métis to be better farmers "by his example, his industry and energy."<sup>47</sup>

Figure 26. McLean, Cardinal, and Daniels family members in St. Paul, Alberta. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-4584-5.



—Linda Boudreau-Semaganis, personal correspondence with RCTL, June 23, 2020.

In 1905, only months after its completion, a group of Métis students set fire to the school where they had been schooled by local clergy. Tragically, one young girl inside the building lost her life. Stories of abuse, malnourishment, and an agenda of forced assimilation surround the industrial school experiences of attending Métis students, while local history questions why this tragedy may have happened.<sup>45</sup>

"Bryan's grandfather lived here and he still went out on hunts . . . and he would be gone for four or five months. . . . When he came [home], it was during a blizzard, and he was wearing . . . a big heavy coat. . . . The settlers, what they used to do is, they'd come in and they'd just move into your house if you were gone. They'd just move in and take it over . . . [John McLean] came home and he was walking through the yard to come up to the door, and this guy looked out . . . and he shot him. He shot him! Luckily, he only hit him like in that collarbone area and it knocked him out, knocked him down and out. That old man, or that man that was there came out and then he realized that was a man and they dragged him in the house, and when old John McLean came to he said, 'What are you doing in my house?' [The settler] said, 'This isn't your house. This is my house. I've been living here for three months already'. . . . John survived. John McLean is Bryan's grandfather. He survived then he moved down to Fishing Lake."

—Linda Boudreau-Semaganis and Bryan Fayant, personal communication with RCTL, June 2020.



Family accounts and **oral tradition** make it clear that the Métis at St. Paul des Métis did not need agricultural inspiration from outsiders to succeed. The Church employed racist stereotypes about the Métis to continue justifying their removal from their lands. Alongside colonial powers in Ottawa, the Church allowed French-Canadian settlers to encroach on the lands that Métis families were living on. In 1908, approximately 100 Métis from St. Paul des Métis held a public meeting where they collectively wrote a petition to send to Ottawa regarding their mounting concerns around the encroachment of non-Métis settlers on colony lands. Similar to the many petitions Métis sent to the Dominion of Canada over time, Métis never received a reply, provoking some to question whether their petition ever made it to the Canadian capital.<sup>48</sup>



Figure 27. Poitras clan, 1905. Photo courtesy of Yvonne Poitras-Pratt, personal communication with RCTL, September 24, 2020.

"St. Paul des Métis, according to my grandfather, was meant to fail. It was not put in place to be a success, but the Catholic Church knew what they were doing; they had long-range plans. You can't take people off the road allowances and bush and give them a year or two and expect them to break this land and start a productive community. That wasn't possible. They knew that. It was set to fail."

—Doreen Poitras, Métis community member, cited in Caleb Anacker et al., *Restoring the History of St. Paul des Métis*, 67.

As Métis people were increasingly displaced by French-Canadians on former colony lands, some Métis families managed to secure title to their lands through homestead entries and scrip claims. However, a secret syndicate made up of a former colony agent, a Dominion lands surveyor, and a local trader worked to swindle many of these plots from the Métis landowners. It appears that illiterate Métis were the primary targets.<sup>49</sup> A Royal Commission was formed in 1911 to investigate the actions of the syndicate, and, shortly thereafter, the land surveyor and the former colony agent fled to the United States and Mexico (strongly suggesting their guilt).<sup>50</sup>

"What we do today is for our children, our great-grandchildren to come. That's how the old-timers [...] thought of us: 'Our great-grand-children will need a place to live. Let's fight for this land. Let's make a stand!'"

—Darren Calliou, Métis community member, cited in Caleb Anacker et al., *Restoring the History of St. Paul des Métis*, 77.

By 1912, many Métis families had left the St. Paul area to join their kinship in other areas such as Lesser Slave Lake or Fishing Lake, while some chose to remain. Those who did remain have faced discrimination for generations from the French-Canadian settlers who were given land and economic advantages by the government and claimed for themselves the spaces that Métis had been establishing in the area for generations.<sup>51</sup>



## Métis in St. Paul Today

The St. Paul area remains an important community to Métis families in communities across Alberta, as scores of ancestral stories are rooted in these lands. A large population of Métis families currently reside amongst what has become a highly multicultural community. The ongoing presence of Métis people in St. Paul today highlights Métis resilience and fortitude, particularly in light of a colonial history of paternalistic discrimination and land dispossession and displacement. As truths surrounding the original establishment of St. Paul continue to be revealed through first-hand accounts by those most impacted by a colonial past, the story of St. Paul will evolve closer to a true telling.

The Métis in St. Paul today continue to celebrate traditions and culture. Many members of the community are working to address the impacts of generations of dispossession and displacement on the Métis families who once proudly called this place home.

One key initiative led by the collective St. Paul community is called “Reconciliation St. Paul.” They are working to “raise awareness about the invisible lines drawn between Métis and non-Indigenous Peoples” and hear the voices of Métis in St. Paul today.<sup>52</sup>

“Generations after St. Paul des Métis, the effects of those events have mixed with many other issues affecting Métis society through 20<sup>th</sup>-century colonization. When we asked how the Half-Breed Reserve still impacted Métis to non-Métis relationships, experiences of racism were ongoing in the descendant's lives, as well as the lives of their parents and children.”

—Anonymous Métis community member, cited in Caleb Anacker et al., *Restoring the History of St. Paul des Métis*, 86.



In 2019, following the hard work of the Métis Nation of Alberta and community members in the area, the Town of St. Paul commemorated the Métis community and history with a joint flag raising ceremony. The Métis Nation Flag is now flown permanently in the Town of St. Paul.

Figure 28. St. Paul Mayor Maureen Miller (left), joined with Audrey Poitras (right), President of the Métis Nation of Alberta, in a Métis Nation flag raising ceremony in St. Paul, <https://www.lakeandtoday.ca/st-Paul-news-metis-flag-raised-in-honour-of-st-Paul's-roots-1911471>.

“The time has come to recognize the contributions made by the Métis people to this town, to this province, to this country and by working together we can move forward. The past is the past and it has made us who we are today and that is a nation of proud citizens, proud Albertans and proud Canadians. We have fought long and hard to ensure that our rights as an Indigenous people were recognized.”

—Audrey Poitras at Métis Flag raising ceremony, August 17, 2019, <https://www.lakeandtoday.ca/st-Paul-news-metis-flag-raised-in-honour-of-st-Paul's-roots-1911471>.



## Scrip Experiences

It has been shared in the histories around Alberta how Métis lands have been systematically invaded by Euro-Canadian governments and settlers who wanted to obtain the land throughout the late 1800s and 1900s. When Canada obtained the land previously known as **Rupert's Land**, they had intended to open the land up to Euro-Canadian settlement. However, Canada was being constantly petitioned by Métis to respect their land rights. To address the Indigenous land rights of Métis across the North-West Territory, the Dominion of Canada established the North-West Half-Breed Commission, also known as the "scrip system."<sup>53</sup>



Figure 29. Money scrip coupon Issued to Jean Baptiste Ferreira for 240 acres. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-2839-4.

Scrip commissioners sent by the Dominion of Canada would arrive in various locations around Alberta to determine if individuals were eligible to begin the scrip application process. The process involved an exchange of nine different documents between the Métis individual, the Scrip Commissioner, and Department of the Interior offices in Ottawa.<sup>54</sup>



Figure 30. Métis community members at the Scrip Commissioner tents at Fort Dunvegan, near Fort Vermilion, AB. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-949-28.

"First Nations got treaties, and the Métis got scrip. Scrip was very different. Scrip was an individual entitlement, a coupon, that could in theory be redeemed for land. The issue is that it was extremely convoluted and difficult to exchange the coupon for land. And, in a lot of cases, the land wasn't where people were, or where Métis people wanted to live. . . 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>.



The lands and money that scrip set aside for Métis families as a method of acknowledging and addressing their land claims were commonly assigned instead to Euro-Canadian settlers. One example of this is the story of a Métis family from Athabasca Landing being swindled out of their money scrip by Euro-Canadian settler Jim Cornwall, a highly successful businessman in Athabasca's north-west transportation business.

In 1900, 751 individual scrip applications were made. 633 were for money scrip while 118 were for land scrip. Of 118 applications for land scrip, 111 were successful, and only 1 applicant applied their scrip coupon to land and eventually received letters patent to their lands.

—Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research, *Métis Scrip in Alberta*, 22.

"Jim Cornwall went up there. They went up there with my dad, interpreting more to the old lady. . . . They said: 'Give us that scrip and we'll bring a lot of money for you.' 'Well,' the old lady said, 'I don't know.' The old man was cutting hay just across the river from there. 'Well, let me see.' Jim Cornwall was saying. So he took it. 'Yeah, I'll bring a lot of money for you!' He put it in his pocket and he got out of there. So this young fellow started running, and yelling to his dad. The old man came across the river with the saddle horse. 'They took my grandmother's scrip,' the young one said. The boat was there beside the river and there was a bridge, so they raced up there. . . . The boat was coming and both of them were standing there, and that pilot, by God, he saw them standing there waiting. So he never stopped; he went right through. So they sold that scrip . . . and they never brought the money."

—Big Joe Cardinal, personal communication with Pat Sawchuk and Joe Sawchuk, cited in Métis Association of Alberta, *Métis Land Rights in Alberta*, 140.

In the Edmonton area, it has been recorded that Richard Secord and John A MacDougall had thirty-seven Métis scrip coupons assigned to them. Complaints of coercion, intimidation, and forgery were made by Métis against these settlers in 1921. At the recommendation of Senator James Alexander Lougheed, the law was changed to prevent prosecutions of fraud in relation to Half-Breed scrip lands. The Métis have been left without any option to pursue justice for their families and communities for generations.

With the signing of the 2017 **Framework Agreement for Advancing Reconciliation**, the Government of Canada agreed to participate in formal negotiations with the Métis Nation of Alberta to understand and resolve the outstanding land claims and injustices related to scrip and scrip fraud.

"This is a very important chapter of Alberta's history, and no reconciliation is possible if the history of Métis lands and scrip is not known."

—Nathalie Kermoal, cited in Jordan Cook, "Métis Land, Scrip and Reconciliation," Faculty of Native Studies, February 1, 2019, <https://www.ualberta.ca/native-studies/about-us/news/2019/february/metis-land-rights-scrip-conference>.



## Victoria Settlement/Pakan

Victoria Settlement, also known as “Pakan” (say: pah-gahn), is one of the many gathering places for Métis and other traders along the Red River Trail and the North Saskatchewan River. In 1862, Methodist missionaries named this gathering place “Victoria Settlement” after Queen Victoria. They established homes and a mission post to work with the Métis and First Nations who gathered here frequently. The lively community here attracted the attention of the HBC, who established their trading post, Fort Victoria, here in 1864.



Métis families who had been living in and around Victoria Settlement were working neighbours of the Euro-Canadian settlers and First Nations in the area. In 1865, several Métis families from Red River were noted to have joined this bustling trade hub, and, by 1872, the HBC recorded at least 150 Métis people connected with the area.<sup>55</sup>

Figure 31. Victoria School #75, Pakan, Alberta. Photograph by Gavinchuk Photo Studio, Smoky Lake, ca. 1900s. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta, A5479.

In addition to the mission and HBC Post, Victoria Settlement had a hospital, a school, storehouses, a post office, and several homes for the Métis, Euro-Canadian settlers, and First Nations by the 1880s.<sup>56</sup> The Métis had river lots all around this community extending through to the Lobstick colony (another Métis community about 20 kilometres away) and to the location of Métis Crossing today. Though the settler posts were closed for a time in the 1880s, the community still thrived—so much so that, in 1887, it was reopened as a trade outpost for Lac La Biche and was renamed “Pakan.”

Pakan, shortened from Pakannak, was the name of Cree Chief James Pakannak Seenum, who was connected to this community. The name was changed to avoid any confusion with Fort Victoria, British Columbia.

It was only when the railroad reached the nearby town of Smoky Lake in 1915 that life in Victoria Settlement began to change dramatically. Most of the economic activity moved off the river and onto the train line at Smoky Lake. Despite this move, many Métis families maintained their residences around this historic community. Robert Buchanan is one Métis man whose family has history in Victoria Settlement.

Robert's father was a police officer in the Smoky Lake area. He opened the first NWMP office in Smoky Lake. Robert Buchanan can still remember his grandfather's stories about how long it took for him to make the trek between Red River and Victoria Landing. His grandfather said that it took them over three months to travel by Red River Cart.

—Métis Crossing, "Victoria Landing Families," unpublished document, n.d.



## Métis in Victoria Settlement/Pakan Today

Métis families across Alberta today celebrate the Métis history and identity acknowledged by Victoria Settlement/Pakan and the neighbouring Métis cultural interpretive centre Métis Crossing.

Fort Victoria was designated a Provincial Historic Resource in 1976 in honour of Victoria Settlement's historical ties to Métis, First Nations, and Euro-Canadian settlers. This designation ensures that the stories of the fur trade, mission, and homestead are conserved for the benefit of all Albertans. In addition to Fort Victoria, the site is interpreted as the Victoria Settlement Provincial Historic Site. It includes the Hudson's Bay Company Clerk's Quarters built in 1865 and the 1906 Pakan Methodist Church.<sup>57</sup>



Figure 32. Victoria Settlement during Voyageur Days. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

In 2001, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada commemorated the area as a National Historic Site of Canada. Its highly visible and physical attributes represent an exceptional illustration within a concentrated area of major themes in prairie settlement, including the development of the fur trade, the establishment of the Métis river lot system, the arrival of missions, prairie agricultural development, and the establishment of eastern European immigrants at the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>58</sup>

Victoria Settlement Provincial Historic Site has a mission to preserve and protect the many types of resources at the site—historical, architectural, cultural, archaeological, and ecological. The goal is to bring life to three major themes in Alberta's history: missionary activity, the fur trade, and settlement.<sup>59</sup>

## Métis Crossing

Métis Crossing is a major Métis cultural interpretive centre in Alberta connected to the historical Victoria Settlement site. Métis Crossing tells Métis stories about the Victoria Settlement and the stories of Métis families in the area. The development and operation of the Cultural Gathering Centre mirror Métis values, including self-sufficiency, respect for Elders, youth participation, and pride in Métis culture.<sup>60</sup>



Figure 33 A view of Métis Crossing's Cultural Gathering Centre from a snowy playground. Photo courtesy of Métis Crossing.

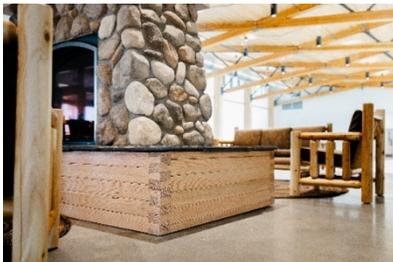


Figure 34. Inside Métis Crossing's Cultural Gathering Centre. Photo courtesy of Métis Crossing.



The 512 acres of land are comprised of five river lots from the Métis families who called the area home in the late 1800s. The site is designed to engage and excite visitors through an exploration of Métis cultural experiences.



Figure 35. Red River Cart parking at Métis Crossing. Photo courtesy of Kimberley Fraser-Airhart, RCTL, August 2020.

Métis Crossing strives to represent and share elements of Métis culture. Their buildings, events, exhibits, program, and community are continual expressions of pride in and respect for Métis culture. Visitors can learn about Métis identity, family life, and the sacredness of place through their various programs and events.<sup>61</sup>



Figure 36. Homestead Trading Post, one of the interpretative buildings at Métis Crossing. Photo courtesy of Emma Grant, personal correspondence with RCTL, September 16, 2020.

Community leaders and members provide educational programming to encourage visitors to participate in activities that foster a deeper appreciation of Métis community, history, **customs**, and celebrations. Their museum features distinctly Métis historical items, along with their historical village, restored homesteads with a farm machinery display, and multiple gardens. A deeper experience of Métis connection with the land is also offered in the nature trail tour along the North Saskatchewan River.<sup>62</sup>

“Métis Crossing is a place of pride where we not only share culture and tradition, but offer an opportunity for others to learn and experience Métis culture. Our long-awaited Cultural Gathering Centre, that has been a dream of Alberta’s Métis people for decades, is finally underway and will open up so many more future possibilities for visitors to enjoy in every season.”

—President Audrey Poitras, May 14, 2018, <http://albertametis.com/2018/05/new-cultural-gathering-centre-will-breathe-new-life-metis-crossing/>.



## Métis Hivernant/Wintering Life

Generations of Métis were living in relation to the buffalo in their lifeways as fur traders, **voyageurs**, middlemen, and family-based communities. In annual patterns, Métis would relocate their communities to their winter homes, or *hivernant* (say: he-vair-nant) villages.<sup>63</sup> Upon arriving in their gathering places, they built many homes. The wintering settlements are some of the most prominent historical locations of many Métis homes.

Wintering was a strategic economic move for Métis, as it allowed them to produce incredible amounts of **pemmican** and trade items that would feed communities and settlers across the Homeland.<sup>64</sup>

As the buffalo hunt changed, their community style evolved, and people began to take up the agricultural practices the Catholic missionaries had been pushing them to begin. Often, what were previously wintering communities became semi-permanent agricultural communities.<sup>65</sup>

Métis communities "were growing gardens and root crops when they were not hunting, and indeed, the hunts were timed to accommodate the crops."

—Doll, Kidd, Day, *The Buffalo Lake Metis Site*, 1988, 20.

The Métis "hunting camp was an institution all its own and a law unto itself. They lived in tents in summer and put up log cabins wherever winter took them. These cabins had large fireplaces and usually puncheon floors."

—Kootenay Brown, "I Remember" (ML 154, f.5). Marie Rose Smith Fonds, Glenbow Archives, Calgary, cited in Dr. Heather Devine, Report for Region 3, n.d.

Winterer, or Hivernant, is a term referencing the Métis "hunting families who entered and left the Plains from reasonably permanent places in the Parkland and woods"

—Maurice F.V. Doll, Robert S. Kidd, and John P. Day, *The Buffalo Lake Metis Site: A Late Nineteenth Century Settlement in the Parkland of Central Alberta*, Human History Occasional Paper No. 4 (N.p.: Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1988) 22.

"The large hunting parties of freemen from the Parkland should almost be considered 'moving settlements' rather than nomadic communities."

—Reverend René Rémas, cited in Doll, Kidd, Day, *The Buffalo Lake Metis Site*, 1988, 20.



Figure 37. A bison herd roaming at Rocky Mountain House National Historic Site. Photo courtesy of Kimberley Fraser-Airhart, RCTL, 2020.

"The true characteristics of the Freemen were the love for freedom and the love for excitement in buffalo hunts. Farming did not appeal to them for they preferred roaming and spending the entire summer on the plains. [...] They paid little heed to clergy, who were trying to persuade them to farm and a new way of survival, but this was not easy."

—Dr. Anne Andersen, *The First Metis . . . A New Nation* (Edmonton, AB: UVISCO Press, 1985), 73.



## Buffalo Lake<sup>b</sup> & Tail Creek

During the 1800s, Buffalo Lake was home to a few prominent gathering places for hundreds of Métis families. Métis established this wintering location strategically nearby to the buffalo herds. It is located north-east of what is now Red Deer. Demographic records kept by the Catholic Church connect Métis families such as the Dumonts, Salois,<sup>1</sup> and Whitfords to this region as early as 1861.<sup>66</sup>

Along the lake are a handful of Métis gathering places, such as Buffalo Lake Wintering Site, Boss Hill Wintering Site, and Grande Pointe Wintering Site. The Buffalo Lake Wintering Site on the north-eastern shores of Buffalo Lake is the largest of the settlements along the lake.<sup>67</sup> While the communities along the lake were connected, each was home to different families. The lake, shaped like a buffalo, has a small creek running south that has a linked community called “Tail Creek,” aptly named, as it appears to be on the tail of the buffalo.

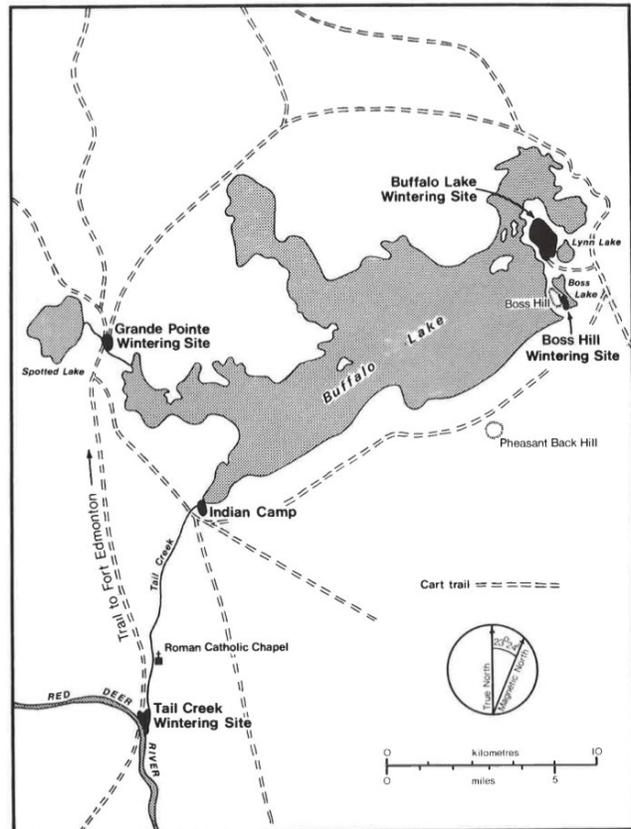


Figure 38. Buffalo Lake map; Doll, Kidd, and Day, 14.

“One of the neat parts of the Buffalo Lake and Tail Creek story is that these are Métis places. There may have been a few cousins that were Cree, but this shows the Métis way of life at the time. It is a wonderful snapshot of a distinctly Métis way of life. Nobody else was building collections of four hundred cabins on the prairie at the time. No other community was doing this—this is what we were doing.”

—Dr. Kisha Supernant, Métis archeologist, personal communication with RCTL, September 2020.

Métis would come to Buffalo Lake and Tail Creek from all different areas. Records kept by the Catholic religious leaders residing among the Métis at the time claim that, fifteen days after arriving together, the Métis would have semi-permanent houses made from locally harvested logs and mud set up for everyone, including the religious leaders.<sup>68</sup> Soon after establishing the homes and other buildings, the leaders would prepare for the buffalo hunt.

<sup>b</sup> This location is not to be confused with the present-day Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement, which is the current name of a Metis Settlement north-east of Edmonton.



Buffalo Lake provided for the community's living needs, such as food and materials for shelter. Being on the Red Deer River allowed the Métis to easily connect to trading partners and access the migrating buffalo herds.

The Métis would come here from various regions of the Homeland, sharing the work of setting up a winter hunt camp and the joy of being in close community. In 1876, Samuel Benfield Steele, a Euro-Canadian NWMP officer, was visiting the camp and recorded a story of a lively wedding full of music and jigging.

"We arrived at Buffalo Lake after dark, and were searching amongst the four hundred cabins to find John Ashon's store when we heard the sound of dance music and directed our steps to a large log cabin in which a lively wedding dance was going on. Two rows of young men and women were on the floor footing Lord Macdonald's Reel to the most rapid time possible, as was the custom among the hunters. Inspectors Jarvis and I entered the room and were directed to Ashon's place. We remained four days in the camp and enjoyed the novelty of the situation. Mrs. Ashon, a young woman about twenty years of age, took good care that we should not suffer from starvation, for she kept the fire going and the pot boiling the whole time. The intervals between meals are very short, for every now and then we would be asked to 'draw in' and despatch buffalo tongues, bannocks, strong tea, and tinned fruits."

—Samuel Benfield Steele, *Forty Years in Canada: Reminiscing of the Great Northwest, With Some Account of his Service in South Africa* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild and Stewart, 1915), 86.

## Tail Creek

Tail Creek was once a thriving Métis community along a trailing river named as though it were the tail of Buffalo Lake. Tail Creek was considered as an alternative wintering site to Lac Ste. Anne at one point and became a popular place for the Métis to settle.<sup>69</sup> By 1876, it had become a large enough hub to host family homes, buildings for large gatherings, a North-West Mounted Police station, and a Catholic house chapel.<sup>70</sup>

[The Métis in Tail Creek] also loved their gambling games, stick games. The Metis loved to jig and dance their quadrilles. However, togetherness was very much needed to enjoy oneself. Where did these joyful people come from, some would ask. They were the people of St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne, the hunters who were away from home.

—Andersen, *The First Métis*, 326.

The wintering sites also bloomed in population as it became a place of solace for many Métis who were fleeing the smallpox epidemic that had overcome many in other communities such as Lac Ste. Anne, St. Albert, and Edmonton. At this point, the sites became established with a seasonally occupied church and houses.



Figure 39. People at Métis Cemetery in Tail Creek. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta, A3750.

When the herds of buffalo began to lessen, Métis lifestyles began to change and shift towards what seemed the best source of subsistence: agriculture. In 1898, a fire ran through the prairies and burned down the buildings at Tail Creek.

With the changing economy, Métis families visited these wintering residences less frequently. Many took up residence with their kin in other places, such as St. Albert and Lac Ste Anne. These changes reflect the Métis values of mobility, kinship, and networking.

Fiddlers played for the fast-stepping jigs and reels, so popular with the Metis. Mrs. Calihoo of Gunn, Alberta, near Lac Ste Anne, 94 years of age in 1955, travelled to Tail Creek on these hunting trips and she was twice the winner of a fine buffalo robe for her skill in dancing the Red River jig. Speed, agility and endurance marked the Metis dances.

—From *Land of the Lakes: A Story of the Settlement and Development of the Country West of Buffalo Lake* (Lacombe: Lamerton Historical Society, 1974), cited in Dr. Heather Devine, Report for Region 3, n.d.

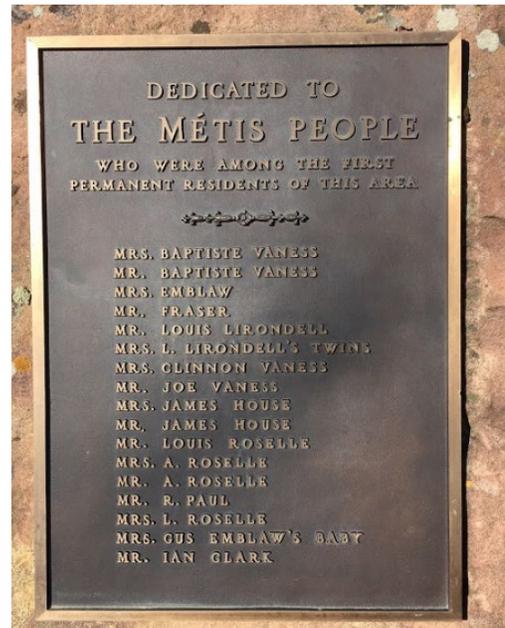


Figure 40. Monument to the Métis Settlers of Tail Creek posted at the Tail Creek Cemetery. Jenn, "Tail Creek: The 8 Year Town," *West of the 5th*. Photo courtesy of <http://westofthefifthmeridian.blogspot.com/2017/03/tail-creek-8-year-town.html>.



## Métis in Buffalo Lake & Tail Creek Today

Many Métis around Alberta have family stories that show how they cherish their culture and historical family ties to Buffalo Lake and Tail Creek. The Métis community in the area is working to protect these historic lands from any further encroachment by Canadian development. This work is a key part of ensuring that Métis can share the stories of the Nation in a positive way.



Figure 41. Tail Creek Park, Campground and Ball Park sign, 2015. Photo courtesy of <https://www.facebook.com/1045409298832674/photos/a.1049762931730644/1049762938397310>



Figure 42. Masters student working with Métis archeologist Dr. Kisha Supernant uncovering pieces of Métis history at Buffalo Lake. Photo courtesy of Dr. Kisha Supernant, personal communication with RCTL, September 24, 2020.

The Métis Nation of Alberta Region 3 arranged for the **repatriation** of part of the historic Tail Creek lands to the Métis people. On the first day of **Métis Week** in 2007, the County of Stettler signed an agreement to transfer the ownership of the Content Bridge Park Campground to the Metis Nation of Alberta. Today there is a campground and ballpark open to the public to enjoy these historic lands of Métis communities.

This park is nearby to the historic Tail Creek Cemetery, which is preserved and protected by provincial legislation. Today, the cemetery proudly displays a cross and a Métis flag adjacent to the original cairn.

The MNA Region 3 leadership is working closely with scholars in the field of Métis studies to determine more about the Métis history and culture around Buffalo Lake. Archaeological studies along the north-eastern shores of the lake have shown the presence of 400 Métis cabins and the continual encroaching impacts of colonization.

"Unfortunately, Tail Creek has been pretty much obliterated by the gas plant. And I mean, the fire [in 1898] would not have actually . . . it would have burned down the buildings, [and] I mean it would've helped archaeology a lot because when you burn something it actually lasts longer. But then I think the gas plant, as far as we know, has dug up anything related to our history."

—Dr. Kisha Supernant, personal communication with RCTL, September 24, 2020.

The Hivernant Métis Cultural Society, located in nearby Big Valley, is another group committed to sharing Métis culture and history. Many of the descendants of the buffalo hunt who resided along Buffalo Lake now live in this area and celebrate their culture at an annual Hivernant Métis Rendezvous.



## Calgary

By the 1870s, Métis families had been gathering in the areas that would become Calgary. Métis individuals who had established themselves in what would become central Alberta grew a network of at least fifty Métis families living in the area.<sup>71</sup> Families such as the Salois and the Dumonts built strong kinship connections across the Homeland.



Figure 43. Métis at the Hunt House, Fort Calgary, 1879, New Museum Project, Media Gallery. Fort Calgary. Photo courtesy of Fort Calgary, <https://www.fortcalgary.com/new-museum-project-media-gallery/>.

In 1875, the HBC established Fort Calgary in Blackfoot territory. The Métis people were reported by the Blackfoot to be a major concern for the Confederacy, as they had established a permanent residency at the Fort.<sup>72</sup> Through alliances and marriages with the people of the Blackfoot Confederacy, the earliest Métis trading families established the kinship necessary to conduct business throughout the area.<sup>73</sup>

Métis contributions to the economy of the HBC were so prominent that the Hunt House was built between 1876 and 1881 specifically for the Métis employees of the Company. It is one of the oldest buildings in Calgary and is one of the few remaining structural reminders of the role of the Métis community in the economic successes of the HBC around the province. The Hunt House provides a vital historic connection to the company and established so much of the early economy, transportation network, and social life of what would become Calgary and Alberta.



Figure 44. Hunt House, 1910. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-1722-7.



Figure 45. Hunt House after restoration. 2016. New Museum Project, Media Gallery. Fort Calgary. Photo courtesy of <https://www.fortcalgary.com/new-museum-project-media-gallery/>.



The area continued to expand following the development of the fort. Métis who did not reside at the fort made homes along the Elbow River, predominantly in the areas now known as Inglewood, Mission, and Beltline. One of the most prominent stories of the Beltline area is the story of the Lougheed Family. The Beaulieu House, now recognized as Lougheed House, was constructed in 1891 as a home for Senator James Alexander Lougheed and his Métis wife Isabella Clarke Hardisty. Lougheed House is described as “a Métis household, infused with a dense Métis identity which was also mediated by class and gender.”<sup>74</sup>



Figure 46. Lougheed House. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, PD-322-1.

Though his wife was a Métis woman, in 1921 Senator James Alexander Lougheed was instrumental in amending the Canadian Criminal Code to limit Métis from holding Euro-Canadian settlers accountable for scrip fraud through the early 1900s. This Métis story in Calgary illustrates the complicated diversity that Métis families experienced. While Lady Lougheed knew her Métis identity and kinship, she resiliently survived discrimination in her status among the non-Indigenous community, while witnessing the political dispossession of other Métis families through the work of her husband.



Figure 47. Lady Belle Lougheed. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-4441-1.

Isabella Clark Hardisty Lougheed (b. 1861, d. 1936) was a dauntless Métis girl from a fur-trading post in the North who grew up to become Lady Lougheed in one of the youngest and liveliest cities in Canada. She was a forward-thinking woman whose involvement in politics, the economy, the arts and in advancing humanitarian causes helped shape the culture of turn-of-the-century Calgary.

—*Conflicting Loyalties: The Hardisty Family Legacy*. Lougheed House, [http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/community-stories\\_histoires-de-chez-nous/conflicting-loyalties\\_allégeances-contradictaires/](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/community-stories_histoires-de-chez-nous/conflicting-loyalties_allégeances-contradictaires/).



## Métis in Calgary Today



Figure 48. Lougheed House, with Métis flag displayed. Photo by Kate Gillis, Rupertsland Centre for Teaching and Learning, August 2020.

In Calgary today, Métis history is memorialized in the names of the Mission, Inglewood, and Beltline communities, which still exist along the Elbow River. Despite the influx of Euro-Canadian settlement brought by the railway, Calgary has always remained a place of Métis community. As a means of recognizing the importance of the Métis in the creation of the city, a number of historic sites and exhibitions are maintained, such as Lougheed House. Lougheed House hosts exhibits in partnership with the Métis community leadership in Calgary in effort to share the diverse narratives of being a Métis in the area through history.<sup>75</sup>

Fort Calgary also maintains ties to the local Métis community. The Métis cabins on the site are an example of the continued recognition of Métis in the area. Fort Calgary also features Métis exhibits from time to time to share Métis lives and stories. These illustrate the prominent roles Métis play in influencing Calgary today.

There is currently a widespread lack of knowledge on what constitutes Métis, and an even wider spread lack of knowledge on who the Métis were—and are—as an incredibly unique people. Through the distinct stories of three Métis, the exhibition demonstrates the industrious, resilient, vibrant, flamboyant, and fun-loving character of the Métis.

—Monique Riel, "Teacher, Trickster, Trader," Fort Calgary, <https://www.fortcalgary.com/fortcalgaryblogs/exhibition-opening-teacher-trickster-trader>.

Calgary is also the home of the Métis Region 3 office and Métis Local 87. The Region 3 office hosts a number of events every year, including a Stampede Breakfast.

"When I'm in Calgary, and I'm on Métis Trail, I often think of Marlene Lanz and all the hard work she put in to have us recognized."

—Dan Cardinal, MNA Vice-President, personal correspondence with RCTL, September 16, 2020.



Figure 49. A snapshot of Métis leaders and other political leaders holding the "Métis Trail" sign. Photo courtesy of Helene Larocque, Alderman, Ward 3, [http://www.helenelarocque.ca/current\\_issues.html](http://www.helenelarocque.ca/current_issues.html).



## Lac Ste. Anne

Lac Ste. Anne has been an important place for many Métis people in Alberta both historically and now as a summer gathering site, provisioning depot, religious mission, and **pilgrimage** site. The history of this place encapsulates the mobility, kinship connections, and **spirituality** of the Métis people.

Several Métis families began living on the west end of the lake in the first decades of the 1800s. Métis from Lac Ste. Anne were frequently recorded as trapping, trading, and travelling together with First Nations in the area by the 1820s. <sup>76</sup> After the merging of the NWC and HBC in 1821 and the subsequent job cuts, even more Métis families began living in the area. <sup>77</sup>

"Each year [Métis] came back to Lac Ste. Anne to fish. At the time, and for many years later, the lake was full of whitefish. The Métis ran the fishery, and provided timber and other supplies to the traders at Fort Edmonton."

—Herb Belcourt, *Walking in the Woods: A Métis Memoir*.



Figure 50. Cabin and tipi at Lac Ste. Anne, ca. 1896. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, PA-377-20.

The lake was an ideal location for the Métis families, as it was thickly wooded and abundant in bison, fish, and other sustenance. The location was close to economic opportunities, such as **hunting**, fishing, and trading, and it was also an important gathering place between buffalo hunt seasons for the wide web of kin connected to the Métis.

Throughout recorded history, Lac Ste. Anne has been known by a variety of names, all of which highlight the sacredness of the site. Explorer and cartographer David Thompson labelled the body of water as "Lake Manitou" on his map in 1801. Rather than devising the name himself, he likely learned it through a translator from Indigenous peoples he encountered at that place who knew the lake as **Manitou Sakahikan** (sasy: man-ih-too sah-guy-gun). In Cree, *Manitou Sakahikan* roughly translates to "God's Lake," which was then frequently interpreted as "Spirit Lake." <sup>78</sup>

Motivated by their dedication and desire to continue in their Catholic faith, one Métis man, Alexis Piché Sr., requested that a Catholic priest come and stay with them in 1841. By 1844, Catholic priests Father Jean-Baptiste Thibault and Father Joseph Bourassa had joined the Métis community at Lac Ste. Anne and established the first permanent Roman Catholic mission west of Winnipeg. <sup>79</sup> Shortly after his arrival, Father Thibault re-named the place *Lac Ste. Anne* after Saint Anne, the mother of the Virgin Mary and grandmother of Jesus. <sup>80</sup>



In 1853, Father Albert Lacombe, the self-proclaimed “Father of the Métis,” took up residence at the Lac Ste. Anne mission.<sup>81</sup> That same year, three Grey Nuns arrived from Montréal. They opened a school for the local Métis children and provided medical care to the community.<sup>82</sup> Below are excerpts from Sister Alphonse’s journal describing the sisters’ arrival at the mission in 1853 and her classroom. Take note of how both of these excerpts reference the buffalo hunt and the tradition of mobility in Métis life.

“At last we had but to cross the Priests' Creek when the church bell started ringing out its welcome and the Fathers, with some thirty people, - the only ones around since all others were out on the Prairie- stood almost at arm's length on the other side.”

“In my classroom, the second largest of the house, I have anywhere from 42 down to 24 [students] according to the presence or the absence of the families. It is a real medley of nations. Only one understands French; the others only Cree and I know so little as yet of that language. This makes for great difficulties of communications.”

—E. O. Drouin, *Lac Ste-Anne Sakahigan* (Edmonton: Editions de l'Ermitage, 1973), 20, 30.

## Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage

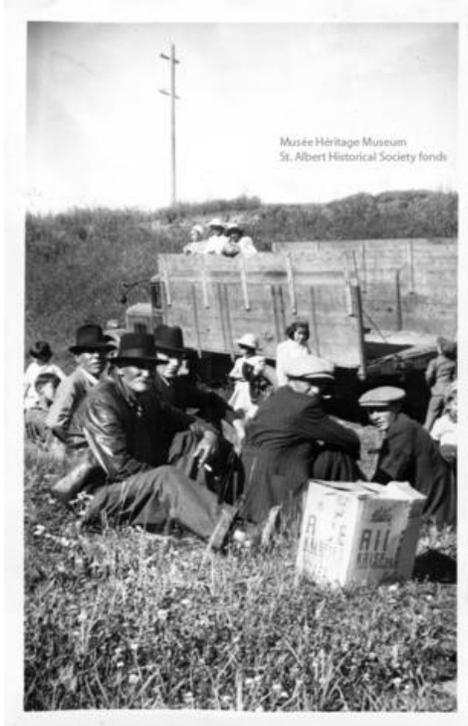
The lake now known as Lac Ste. Anne has a rich spiritual history that both pre-dates and includes the arrival of Europeans and the introduction of Catholicism. Métis, Cree, Nakota Sioux, and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have all found this lake to be a sacred gathering place, and it continues to be an important place of pilgrimage every year.

Following the relocation of the Roman Catholic Mission to St. Albert in 1861, the mission site at Lac Ste. Anne fell into disrepair, and the chapel collapsed in 1887.<sup>83</sup> That same year, Father Joseph Lestanc (an Oblate priest from St. Albert) travelled to the shrine of Sainte-Anne-d’Aurey in his homeland of Brittany, France. This trip inspired him to organize the first Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage in July 1889 during the Feast of Ste. Anne.<sup>84</sup>

That first year, around 100 Métis people from Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert participated in the pilgrimage. By the early 1900s, approximately 1,000 people were attending the pilgrimage at Lac Ste. Anne, with many of the attendees travelling from Morinville and St. Albert.<sup>85</sup> In 1926, it is reported that there were 2,500 Indigenous and nearly 3,000 non-Indigenous attendees.<sup>86</sup>



Figure 51. People walking near the shore during the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage, ca. 1926. Photographer Peggy Symon. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta, A15459.



At some point, the pilgrimage became a two-day event, with Mass celebrated in Cree one day and in English and French the following day. People travelled by foot, horse, and cart, as well as, eventually, by car, train, and busloads to participate in the pilgrimage and go into the healing waters.<sup>87</sup> Since the very beginning of the pilgrimage, many pilgrims have believed that they have been cured of their ailments by the waters of Lac Ste. Anne.<sup>88</sup>

The event continued to grow with more and more attendees travelling from many different places to take part in the religious activities. In 1973, it is reported that people travelled from as far away as Montana, the Dakotas, and California to attend the pilgrimage.<sup>89</sup>

Today, over 40,000 people from all across the world travel to Lac Ste. Anne to participate in the six-day event.<sup>90</sup>

Figure 52. Métis families on route to Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage, ca. 1920s–1930s. Photo courtesy of Musée Héritage Museum, CA MHM 2003-is-mhm-475.

### Select Cures from the *Codex Historicus*

From the very first pilgrimage, attendees have claimed to have been healed by the waters of Lac Ste. Anne. Below is a small selection of cures recorded by the missionaries.<sup>91</sup>

"Janvier L'Hirondelle is cured of an advanced case of deteriorating eye sight. Ninety paces away he could not distinguish people."

"Mrs. Albert Cunningham cured of a sickness which has brought her to extremity." [Sometime between 1889 and 1891.]

"Mrs. Magloire Belcourt, bedridden during the former six months and who is unable to walk, is also carried into church. She too gets up, and walks out on her own." [took place between 1889 and 1891]

"A seventeen-year-old boy, paralyzed from the neck down since many years, is brought into the church, attends Mass on a wheelchair in which he has to be held by a priest, receives Holy Communion. He is said to have totally recovered (August 26, 1894)."

–The Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage website lists a number of cures accredited to the waters of Lac Ste. Anne. These cures were originally listed in the Mission's *Codex Historicus*, volume 1, page 17.

<https://lacsteannepilgrimage.ca/worship/cures/>.



## Métis in Lac Ste. Anne Today

Lac Ste. Anne continues to be a diverse community, a home to Métis, First Nations, and non-Indigenous peoples. The long history of Métis, First Nations, and Euro-Canadians is still reflected in the area as these communities continue to coexist.<sup>92</sup>

"Today there is still a prominent Métis presence in Lac Ste. Anne. For example, I went to high school and elementary in Onoway, much of the student population had traditional Métis last names, such as Bellcourt, Lambert, Cardinal, Letendre, Bellrose."

—Rylee Sargeant, Métis community member in Lac Ste. Anne, personal communication with RCTL, August 5, 2020.

Gunn Métis Local 55 represents the interests of the Lac Ste. Anne Métis Community. The community celebrates their connection to the land in and around Lac Ste Anne. They organize events to care for the land and classes to help the community learn Cree and **Michif**.<sup>93</sup>



Figure 53. A bench in Dion Day Park, Lac Ste. Anne Metis. Photo courtesy of <https://lacsteannemetis.com/preserving-the-past-securing-the-future/>.

"[T]he commitment of our Local is threefold:

1. To honour our Ancestors through the ongoing restoration of our collective history and culture;
2. To continue building the capacity necessary for us to act on behalf of current and future members regarding existing and proposed industrial development in our traditional territories; and
3. To persist in developing the necessary infrastructure that allows us to provide services to our members."

—Gunn Métis Local, "Preserving the Past . . . Securing the Future," [lacsteannemetis.com, https://lacsteannemetis.com/preserving-the-past-securing-the-future/](https://lacsteannemetis.com/preserving-the-past-securing-the-future/).

Dion Day Park is situated on land once occupied by the Métis family of Joachim Courtepatte. The Courtepatte family and their kin in the Dion family were honoured when the park was named by Local Council Members in the 1990s. This area has a celebrated history, as it is near where Pat and Jerry Dion used to turn part of the lake into a skating rink for the community each year. Today, Gunn Métis Local 55 acts as stewards for Dion Day Park, in conjunction with the current titleholder, Lac Ste. Anne County.<sup>94</sup>

Every third week in July, thousands of pilgrims continue to make their way to the shores of Lac Ste. Anne. The Métis Nation of Alberta hosts a Mass on one day of the week each year. Many people of all backgrounds go in search of healing and spiritual renewal. Others attend to reconnect with old acquaintances and forge new friendships. The pilgrimage has become the largest annual Catholic gathering in Western Canada.<sup>95</sup>

"To me, the Lac Ste. Anne pilgrimage is a reunion; for friendship, and for storytelling, as you walk around the tents and motorhomes. I enjoy listening to the stories and the laughter."

—Belcourt, *Walking in the Woods*, 40.



## Métis River Lots vs. Township Systems

### River Lot System

The river lot system was 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. The narrow lots also fostered a sense of community and connection, since homes could be built closer together and all along a main waterway.

The river lot system was an adaptation of the French seigneurial system, which was the common way of dividing and distributing land in New France and, later, Quebec. It was frequently used by the Métis when creating their communities, including St. Albert.<sup>96</sup>



Figure 54. Homes along the Sturgeon River in St. Albert, ca. 1912. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NC-6-439.

### Township System

On July 15, 1870, the HBC transferred “ownership” of Rupert’s Land to the Dominion of Canada. After the passing of the *Homestead Act* in 1872, the Government hired **land surveyors** to divide and distribute sections of land using the township system. Townships are square sections of land that did not guarantee access to water, wood, or farmland. Homes were also more likely to be built farther away from each other.

One township would be divided into thirty-six sections, with each section being further divided into four 160-acre sections, also known as “quarter sections.” In order to gain title to a quarter section, an eligible homesteader would first have to pay a registration fee and then build a house, cultivate fields, and build fences and out-buildings within the first three years of occupation. Failure to do so would result in them losing the title (ownership) to their homestead.

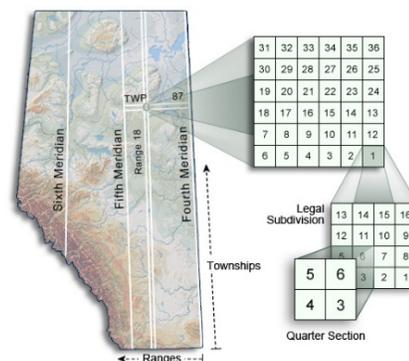


Figure 55. Government of Alberta, a representation of the township system in Alberta, [https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-township-survey-system.aspx?utm\\_source=redirector](https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-township-survey-system.aspx?utm_source=redirector).



## St. Albert

While the beginnings of what is now the City of St. Albert are often credited to Father Lacombe and the relocation of the Lac Ste. Anne mission, Métis people had been living in this area long before Lacombe arrived in the region. Some of the early Métis families made their home at Big Lake just west of present-day St. Albert. Métis families in the area have been building their community in the area, farming, working with the trading companies, and building infrastructure for generations. As early as 1821, the Big Lake area was also a pasture for the horses and cattle of Fort Edmonton. Métis men often worked for the post protecting the horses and cattle from thieves.<sup>97</sup>

Big Lake was a part of the network of Métis gathering places during the buffalo hunts.<sup>98</sup> In April 1861, decades after Métis families had begun living near Big Lake, Father Lacombe relocated the central mission from Lac Ste. Anne to the top of a hill overlooking the Sturgeon River. The area was named “St. Albert” after Father Albert Lacombe. Over time, many Métis families from Lac Ste. Anne chose to move to St. Albert to join their families in celebrating their culture and faith traditions.<sup>99</sup>

Métis living in the Big Lake and St. Albert area were diligent agriculturalists and avid contributors to the community. They were building bridges, contributing to church life, and establishing local schools. At one point, certain Métis families had so many children that they established their own schools.<sup>100</sup> St. Albert was home to two Métis family schools: the Sam Cunningham School in 1886 and the Bellerose School in

"I was educated in a little country school, Bellerose School. We walked miles it seemed, no matter how cold, and we got to school and we got an education."

Dr. Anne Andersen, Banquet speech, 1973. Banquet held by the St. Albert Historical Society, during which Anne Anderson gave an autobiographical speech. Musée Heritage Museum CA MHM 2003-02-186.

Figure 56. Children at Cunningham School in 1937. L–R: Willie Hoffman, Raymond Kremer, Albert Verstraete, Lilian L'Hirondelle, Howard Albrecht, George Delisle, Glen Albrecht. Photo courtesy of Musée Heritage Museum Archives, CA MHM 2003-is-mhm-728.



1889.<sup>101</sup>

### Residential Schools in St. Albert

Despite having their own schools, many Métis of St. Albert could not escape the residential school system. St. Albert had two schools: the Edmonton **Indian** Residential School, also known as “Poundmaker” (which was operated by the Methodist Church from 1924 to 1968), and the St. Albert Youville School. The Youville School was connected to the Roman Catholic mission and convent at St. Albert. It was operated by the Grey Nuns from at least 1873 to 1948.<sup>102</sup> Many Métis children attended Youville School up until 1936 when it was made an “Indian-only” school.<sup>103</sup>



## Métis Petitions for Land Rights in St. Albert

Beginning in the late 1870s, the Métis of St. Albert began sending petitions to Ottawa requesting the completion of an official river lot survey in the area. <sup>104</sup> Similar to the settlers in nearby Edmonton, they wanted a river lot survey completed to ensure that their land claims would be respected and that they would receive title to their land instead of being perceived as squatters by the Canadian government and left to the mercy of a township survey. Though land surveyors came through St. Albert multiple times throughout 1877 and 1882, the attempts to survey the land as river lots failed each time, and Métis were continually left in uncertainty regarding their claims to land. <sup>105</sup>



Figure 57. Image created by Christina Hardie for this resource featuring some Metis last names from St. Albert. The spelling used is reflective of the spelling on the 1884 survey map. There are many spelling variations for these names. For example, Chelifieur is sometimes spelled “Chalifoux” and Bourdry as “Beaudry.”

Finally, after years of petitioning the Canadian government for recognition, Métis and other neighbours in St. Albert received a completed land survey, acknowledging their river lots. In June 1883, Deane completed the river lot survey in St. Albert, a copy of which can be found on the following page. <sup>106</sup> With the approval of this survey, the residents of St. Albert were

assured that they would not lose their homesteads. Take note of the many Métis surnames on the map.

## St. Albert Mounted Rifles

Unlike the Métis people in Saskatchewan, Métis in St. Albert had their land claims resolved in St. Albert by 1885. However, amid rumours of an attack on the community by First Nations associated with Big Bear and **Louis Riel** following the events at Duck Lake, Frog Lake, and Batoche, a group of residents led by Métis from the area formed the St. Albert Mounted Rifles militia. <sup>107</sup> With the exception of Dan Maloney, all of the officers in the Mounted Rifles were Métis. After an uneventful deployment to defend the Catholic mission at Lac La Biche in June that year, the St. Albert Mounted Rifles disbanded a few months later on July 9, 1885. <sup>108</sup>

"I grew up with a story being told by my Grandma

[Dr. Thelma Chalifoux] . . . she used the word

Otipemisiwak. The St. Albert Métis were well

established and didn't necessarily rely on Riel but still

supported his cause as many were related to those

–Josh Morin, grandson of Dr. Thelma Chalifoux, personal communication with RCTL, August 21, 2019.

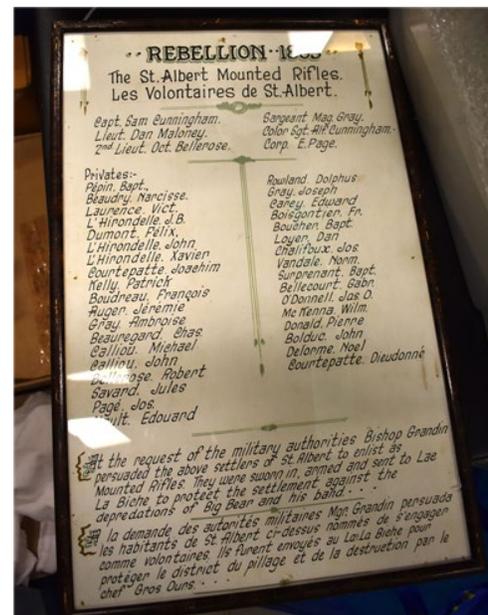
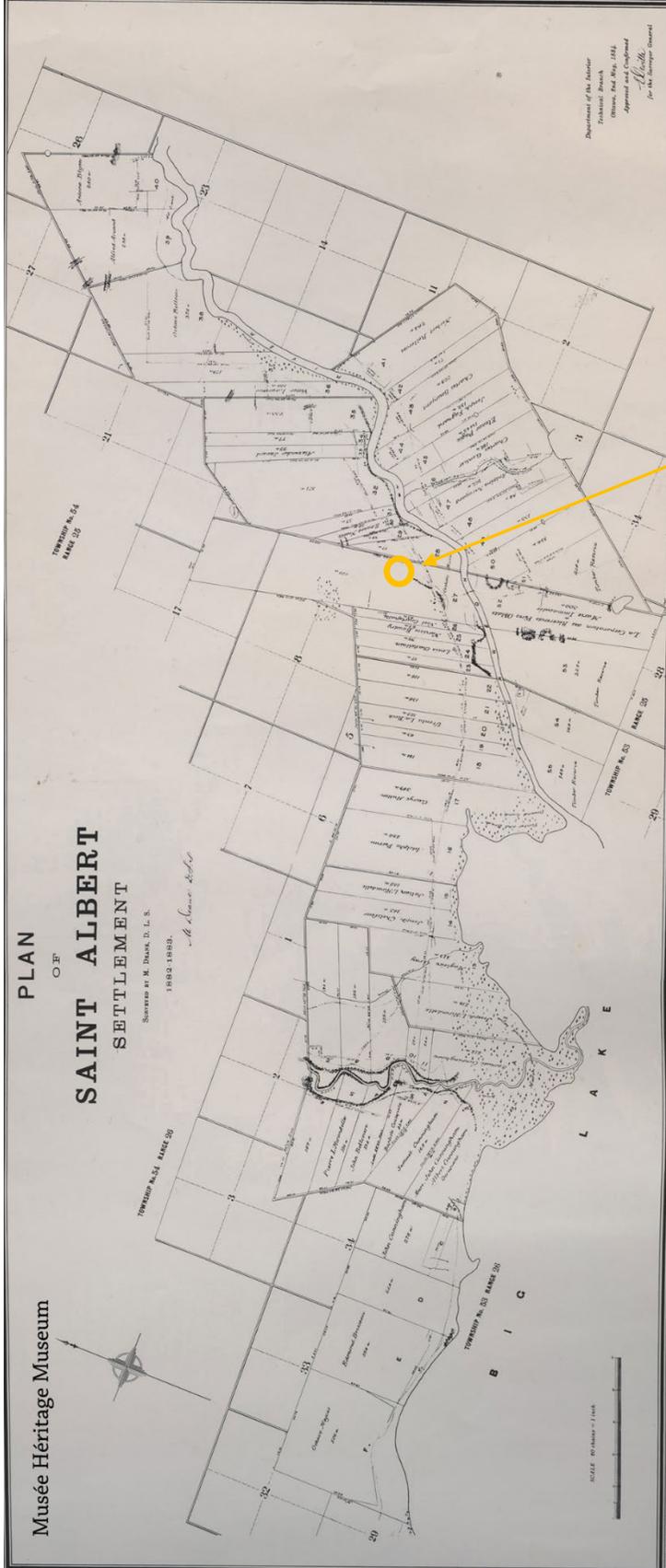


Figure 58. St. Albert Mounted Rifles roster listing the members of the St. Albert Mounted Rifles, the majority of whom were Metis. Photo courtesy of Musée Héritage Museum, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate collection, X971.61.



Consider river lot 29 on the large map, highlighted by the yellow circle. Had the community of St. Albert been surveyed using the township system instead of respecting the previously established river lot system, seven families would have found themselves on a single township lot, and only one head of household would be granted title to the land. This would leave six other families without a homestead in the eyes of the Canadian government despite living on the land for years. Although the government respected river lots in some places, the implementation of the township system across the North-West essentially carved up the land according to colonial ideals that disregarded previous ways of being.

Figure 59. St. Albert River lot survey, 1884. Photo courtesy of Musée Héritage Museum.



Figure 60. 1884 survey map of St. Albert edited by Christina Hardie for this resource.



## Métis in St. Albert Today

Métis remain a prominent community within St. Albert today. The significant Métis history in this area is illustrated in the many community places bearing Métis names, such as Riel Recreation Park, and Cunningham Road. In addition to the general community places, there are prominent locations where Métis celebrate and share their stories, traditions, and culture with the wider community.

One of the Métis highlights in St. Albert is Michif Cultural Connections. It was founded by the Honourable Senator Dr. Thelma J. Chalifoux to preserve, promote, protect, and celebrate Métis culture.<sup>109</sup> Through leadership and education, Michif Cultural Connections provides programs, exhibits, and Métis museum artefacts and manages a library of resources at the historic Juneau House.

"When I do my beading classes,  
any classes, it's for the community.  
I always tell the children,  
I am here for you."

—Sharon Morin, personal communication with RCTL, September 3, 2020.



Figure 61. Juneau House, Michif Cultural Connections. Photo courtesy of <http://www.michifconnections.ca/>.



Figure 62. Senator Thelma Chalifoux. Photo courtesy of <http://www.michifconnections.ca/thelma.html>.

On a national level, Chalifoux is remembered as a Canadian Senator, who served from 1997 until 2004. Provincially she is remembered as a life-long advocate for Métis. . . . For many decades she worked on land-rights claims for the Métis and she was honoured for her work with two awards: the National Aboriginal Achievement Award and the Métis National Council Lifetime Achievement Award. In St. Albert, Thelma Chalifoux is remembered for establishing the Michif Cultural and Resource Institute, which honours her people, the Métis.

—"Chalifoux remembered . . .," *St. Albert Gazette*, September 27, 2018, <https://www.stalberttoday.ca/local-news/2709-obit-chalifoux-sj-1296643>.

Musée Heritage Museum is another place where Métis identity, history, and culture are shared and celebrated. In partnership with Métis in St. Albert, they support education in a plethora of subjects. In addition to their in-house exhibitions, they manage an extensive archives collection and five heritage sites. Sites such as the Father Lacombe Chapel tell key aspects of Métis history and identity.<sup>110</sup>

"Share who you have talked to, where you learned it from. Say I don't know to your students, and that we can learn more from people who do. For example, I learned it from my friends at RLI, who learned it from educators at the Michif Cultural Centre. They can help us learn more."

—Shari Strachan, Director of Musée Heritage Museum, personal communication with RCTL, September 3, 2020.



Another heritage site with distinct Métis connections is the St. Albert Grain Elevator Park. The old railway station today is an educational centre, teaching St. Albert history, including about the silver and green grain elevators dated 1906 and 1929 respectively.

A few steps away is Métis River Lot 24. This location was once an HBC outpost; over time, it became Métis River Lot 24, home to Métis sisters Louisa Belcourt and Amelia Cunningham and their families. Their homes are preserved and open for visitors. Alongside these Métis homes is the Anne Andersen Garden.



Figure 63. Louisa Belcourt's family's home, left. Amelia Cunningham's family home, right.  
Photos by Billie-Jo Grant, Rupertsland Centre for Teaching and Learning, August 2020.

The Anne Andersen Garden honours Dr. Anne Andersen, a celebrated Métis scholar and Cree language teacher. She has recorded Métis stories, histories, traditions, and values in more than ninety different books. Her writing celebrates Métis **storytelling** in Alberta. This garden features the traditional plants that she researched in her resources.

"The St. Albert-Sturgeon-Sturgeon County Metis Local was established in 2016.  
The mandate of the Local is:  
To recapture, celebrate and highlight our Metis culture,  
To identify and honour our elders,  
To identify our youth to ensure the future preservation of our culture, and  
To involve the community."

Métis gather at the St. Albert-Sturgeon-Sturgeon County Metis Local monthly to discuss community needs and support each other in various ways.

—St. Albert-Sturgeon County Métis Local, Facebook post, April 5, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Nonprofit-Organization/St-Albert-Sturgeon-County-Metis-Local-112615443730119/>.

St. Albert is a distinct location amongst the communities because Métis history and identity are so well preserved within the landscape of the city. Most Métis families around Alberta have had their family stories dismissed for several generations, resulting in impacts such as displacement from homes and intergenerational trauma. In St. Albert, Métis history is not only celebrated in Métis community and events, but it is also present and preserved in the landscape.



## Lesser Slave Lake Area

Lesser Slave Lake is an important lake to many Métis families. There are several communities around the lake that Métis have called home from the early 1800s. Families share generations of stories of trapping, hunting, fishing, berry picking, and visiting family in many locations along the lake. The list in gold text below names just a few important locations in the area.

Slave Lake,  
Buffalo Bay, Kinuso,  
Joussard, Faust,  
Canyon Creek,  
Widewater-Wagner

—Just a few of the gathering places important to Métis in the Lesser Slave Lake area. Patricia Mitchell and Ellie E. Prepas, *Atlas of Alberta Lakes* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), <http://albertalakes.ualberta.ca/?page=lake&region=1&lake=35>

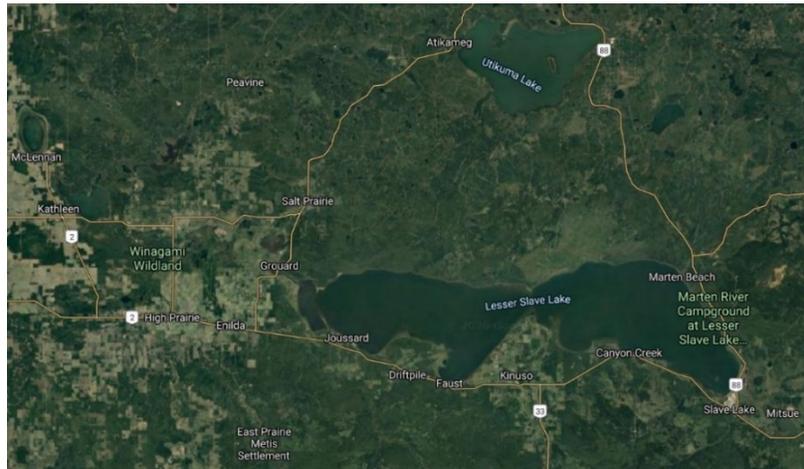


Figure 64. Communities today in the Lesser Slave Lake region. Photo courtesy of Google Maps.

Each community has an interconnected history with distinct family stories located within each gathering place. This section highlights a few pieces of Métis history around Lesser Slave Lake to illustrate the interconnected history that the many Métis communities share. These general histories do not reflect the unique details of each Métis community in the Lesser Slave Lake region. As with every local community story shared here, educators are encouraged to reach out to Métis in the area to learn more about the specific histories to which their school communities are near.

The Town of Slave Lake is just one of many communities in this kinship network. In 1801, the NWC established a fur trading post nearby to present-day Slave Lake to foster even more trade with the Métis and non-Métis in the area. In historical records, the community in the area around the NWC post went by several different names, including “Fort Blondin.”



Figure 65. An unidentified Métis family from Lesser Slave Lake, ca. 1800s, taken by Rita Stevens. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta, A3487.



Into the 1900s, Métis along the lake were developing their communities as they continued to trade, fish, trap, hunt, bead, and care for their families in a variety of ways.



Figure 66. Métis boys running a race at Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta, 1899. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Museum, NA-949-23.



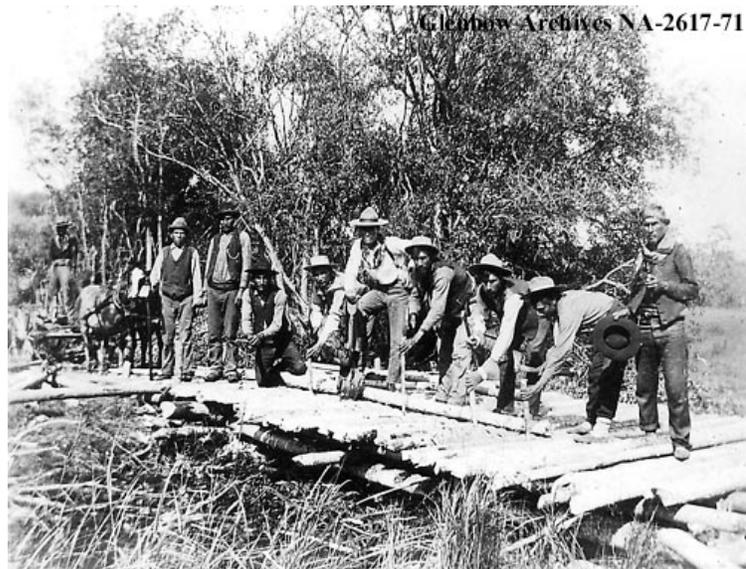
Figure 67. Métis leader Peter Tomkins Jr. and friend stand in Jousard, 1942. Photograph taken by James Brady. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Museum, PA-2218-197.

Figure 68. Métis men building a bridge in Lesser Slave Lake. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Museum, NA-2617-71.

Jousard is one community along the lake that was an important centre where Métis gathered with their kinship. The Roman Catholic Mission in this area was a centre for the celebration of Métis faith traditions and still is today.<sup>111</sup>

Kinuso is another community in the Lesser Slave Lake region that is home to Métis families. It was once called “Swan River” until the community renamed it “Kinuso,” which in Cree translates to “fish.”<sup>112</sup> Fishing is a prominent activity for many Métis families in the region.<sup>113</sup>

Another community along the lake is Faust, located about halfway between Slave Lake and Grouard. Families here continue to practice Métis lifeways in a sacred area known as Frost Hills, an area across the highway from them.



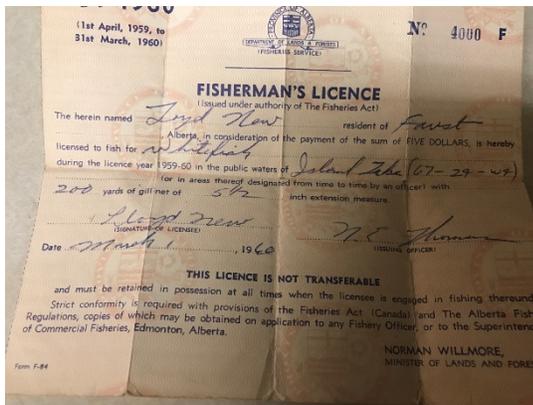


## Métis in Lesser Slave Lake Area Today

Métis families living around this area enjoy life, celebrating their Métis culture and communities today. Several communities remain intricately connected to each other around all parts of the lake. Jossard, Kinuso, Faust, and Frost Hills are among the many community gathering places in the Lesser Slave Lake area.

"Along the lake there are many communities. Families are related and everyone helps each other. Growing up I didn't go to school in December because I fished on Lesser Slave Lake with my dad. This was the way of life for us. My grandmother would smoke fish every year. My father would hunt with his dad and brothers to feed our big family which was usually 6-8 houses. When we cut moose meat, we operated like a factory. Sometimes [we would harvest] 3-4 moose in one day then it was shared with the family homes. In the winter, we would trap on the lake. It was our winter playground. In the summer, it was our playground. Living along the lake and visiting families in other communities along the lake was a way of life for many of us. He received his fishing license at 16. It was generations of fishing in our communities along Lesser Slave Lake. Every year our family would go by boat across the lake to camp and pick berries."

—Bev New, personal communication with RCTL, August 20, 2020.



The Métis community is working to protect generational gathering places for working the trap line, hunting, berry picking, medicine gathering, and praying for generations. Here, the community teaches their children a variety of cultural life ways, including hunting, skinning moose, and survival skills required to live on the land.

Figure 69. Family fishing license from 1960. Photo courtesy of Bev New, personal communication with RCTL, August 20, 2020.

One annual event that brings the Métis communities in the area together with other communities is the North Country Fair. The fair has gathered people together since 1979 as a celebration of the Summer Solstice.<sup>114</sup>

The Town of Slave Lake is of critical importance to Métis in the province today, especially because it is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta's Region 5 office. Métis meet and gather here to celebrate Métis culture and discuss the needs and interests of citizens in Region 5.



Figure 70. Richard Froese. Storytelling at North Country Fair, date unknown. Photo courtesy of South Peace News, <https://www.southpeacenews.com/north-country-fair-2020-cancelled/>.



## Grouard

Grouard has been an important place of gathering and working for generations of Métis. This location is one of the many in the integrated network of community gathering places around Lesser Slave Lake. Métis knew this land as a stopping place between major trading posts such as Fort Vermilion and Fort Edmonton and as a place to meet with their Métis and First Nations kin who would support them along the way.

By 1815, the lively presence of Métis families working with the NWC on the west-end of the lake came to the attention of the HBC. They decided to establish their own trading post to engage with Métis on the east end of the lake, calling it “Fort Waterloo.”

Early Métis such as interpreter Louis Guiboche, a French halfbreed, entered service in the HBC in at the age of 30. By 1870 a number of Métis from the 1870 Riel Resistance settled in the area. The crews on the riverboats were largely composed of Métis.

Most of the stopping places on the trail were Métis families' homes such as Chalifoux, Gladu, Cartier, Gaucher, Kipling, and Hamelin.



Figure 71. Photo: York Boats freighting trade goods and carrying people, captured at Lesser Slave Lake in 1886. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-2283-10.

—Métis Nation of Alberta, 2014 Calendar.

The Métis community in this area continued to grow economically and socially throughout the 19th century. The Métis strength was in laborious work such as scow and **York Boat** construction, waterway navigation for both freight and ferry purposes, trapping, and trading.

By 1872, the presence of many Métis families in this region motivated the Roman Catholic Church to establish a Mission in the area. One of the primary impacts of the church in this region was the establishment of the residential school funded by the Government of Canada, Grouard School, also known as “St. Bernard’s,” in 1895. By 1949, Métis students were one of the more prominent Indigenous student populations, accounting for half of those in residence.<sup>115</sup> The school affected Métis children and families in this region until 1961, when enrolment began to decline with the opening of day schools.<sup>116</sup>



Into the 1900s, Métis presence remained essential, as they continued to develop the fur trade and local economies in the region. They were key contributors to the region's physical development, being the primary recruits for road and bridge construction. In 1909, the impact of the Catholic Church in the region led to the name change from "Fort Waterloo" to "Grouard," in reference to Father Emile-Jean-Marie Grouard and the Grouard Mission. <sup>117</sup>



Figure 72. Henry, also known by the name "Harry Pruden," in Grouard, 1965. Photo taken by James Brady. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, PA-2218-970.



Figure 73. Mrs. Pierre Hamelin of Grouard, ca. 1964. Photo taken by James Brady. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, PA-2218-968.



Figure 74. Interior of Laboucan's stopping place on the Grouard-Peace River Trail, October 1913. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-493-5.

"My name is Willie Hamelin. I am eighty-one years old. I was born in Grouard . . . It was all bush, all over. No place to live. The priests had come before me and had a Mission here, ever since they came. And a church, too . . .

"They moved one by one from all over—Lac la Biche, St. Paul—all over. They came on the boat from Athabasca Landing. They were mostly French half-breeds. From St. Albert particularly—the Belcourts, and Gladus. Courtereilles—all of them."

—Willie Hamelin, interviewed by Rick Belcourt, n.d., South Peace Historical Society, <https://calverley.ca/article/18-028-willie-hamelin-of-grouard-a-thoughtful-octogenarian/>.

The Métis families in this area have been hard-working community builders for generations. In 1913, there were over 1,000 people living in Grouard. There were stores, hotels, banks, barbershops, schools, a doctor's office, a dentist's office, and a detachment of NWMP. The bustling community expected the railway to come through Grouard at one point; however, it was eventually built away from the town, about 12 miles to the south, so many businesses relocated to High Prairie. <sup>118</sup>



## Métis in Grouard Today

Métis families living around this area enjoy life by celebrating their Métis culture and communities today. Grouard remains a central location for Métis in the area, as it is still well-connected to the many Métis gathering places around the lake. Métis families in the area tell their stories best, just as Anne Bellrose shares her memories below.

"I was born in Grouard, Alberta, April 17, 1915. And I was raised there too... My grandparents lived about a quarter of a mile down... My dad's mom lived closer, just a short distance, like just across the street. And the other one lived approximately a mile away. We used to call her Big Grandma, Big Kohko. The one that lived close by was Kohma. That was her, Kohma... Instead of saying Kohkum, it's just Kohma. It's just that's the way they all called her.

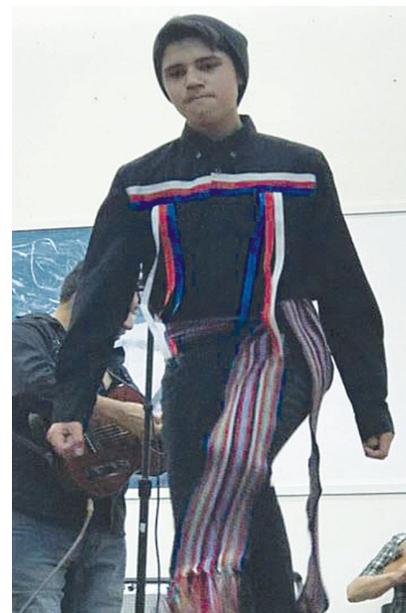
But my grandmother there, Mrs. McDermott she was a great old lady. After her husband died, she was a trapper. Yeah. There used to be four or five old ladies get together, I remember so plainly. They used to wear denim skirts, you know long skirts and they had a big pack sack and they had dogs and away they'd go for ten days, two weeks at time in the bush. Sleep outside. Then they'd come home with squirrels, weasels, muskrats, beaver. And then we'd help her clean them up when she got home."

—Anna Bellrose, interviewed by Lisa Krebs and Heidi Standeven, June 30, 1998, cited in Evans et al., 6-7.

In Grouard, the Métis story is preserved in the museum and the historic St. Bernard Church. It is the Métis community members themselves, though, who are the best at sharing about their history and culture in this area across the generations.

Métis today work with schools such as Northern Lakes College to celebrate Métis history and culture, as well as to empower Métis students of all ages to strengthen their education. Northern Lakes College is among the collection of community connections Métis have in the area today.

Figure 75. Kenton Alook, jigging at the Métis Celebration at Northern Lakes College, Grouard. November 2017. Photo courtesy of South Peace News, <https://www.southpeacenews.com/metis-culture-celebrated-by-nlc/>.





## Residential School Experiences<sup>c</sup>

The intergenerational trauma residential schools have caused among Métis families is a legacy of pain and suffering. Alberta had the most residential schools in all of Canada.<sup>119</sup> All around the province, Métis families still feel the impacts of intergenerational trauma that residential schools have had on their families. As the residential school legacy is unveiled across Canada today, the distinct experiences Métis have had in the schools are often untold.

Residential schools were established between the 1880s and 1996 to assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian communities and culture. These schools were funded by Euro-Canadian governments and run by Catholic and Anglican churches. Assimilating Indigenous children would enable the Dominion of Canada to retain better control of communities and land.

One of the most common misperceptions of Métis identity in the Euro-Canadian understanding is the race-based idea of being “part-Indigenous” and “part-non-Indigenous.” A Métis Nation citizen in Alberta is someone “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,” not part-this-part-that.<sup>120</sup>

"I didn't play with the Métis kids. Only in the country or on weekends. My dark relatives, I wouldn't play with cause I was scared I would be, get caught or [inaudible] . . . they used to call you Metisse or Sauvage, French word for Metis or savage they'd call you."

—Anonymous, 2000, quoted in Tricia Logan, *Lost Generations: The Silent Métis of the Residential School System* (Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 2001).

These residential schools were created for the purpose of separating Aboriginal children from their families, in order to minimize and weaken family ties and cultural linkages, and to indoctrinate children into a new culture – the culture of the legally dominant Euro-Christian Canadian society, led by Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald.

—Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, Library and Archives Canada, 2015, V., [http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/res-Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future July 23 2015.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/res-Honouring%20the%20Truth%20Reconciling%20for%20the%20Future%20July%2023%202015.pdf).

When residential schools were being established in 1879, being “part-non-Indigenous” meant that Métis children were considered “half-civilized.” Having a half-civilized identity meant to Euro-Canadian governments that Métis were not included in their federal responsibility to Indigenous peoples, so any education for Métis students was designated a provincial responsibility.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>c</sup> This is very brief overview of the experiences of Métis students in Alberta residential and industrial schools. Stories from survivors and other details are best found in resources such as *Métis Memories of Residential Schools* (Métis Nation of Alberta) and texts published by Legacy of Hope Foundation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.



It is important to consider the fact that the schools were given funding per student. This meant that, in many situations, the schools would either encourage and/or force Métis children to fill the spaces untaken by First Nations children. <sup>122</sup> In some cases, Métis students were counted for less funding because they were seen as being “half-civilized.” This affected the way school leaders and teachers treated them. Due to the funding gap, many Métis children received only a Grade 1 or 2 level education and performed child labour throughout their ten to twelve years of schooling. <sup>123</sup>

"Regardless of the exact number, Métis people share in the Indigenous collective trauma as a result of forced assimilation by the Canadian government."

—RCTL, Orange Shirt Day 2019 Grades 5–12, Google Slides Presentation.

The social repercussions of the “half-civilized” label meant that Métis would face unique discrimination and segregation amongst their peers and kin as students in these schools. Survivors of residential schooling have described feeling not good enough to be treated the same as a First Nations person nor a Euro-Canadian person.

Métis families wanted their children to have access to quality education that would empower them as Métis individuals. Enduring regular dispossession and displacement meant that most Métis communities could not establish local schools for their children.



Figure 76. Group photo of students and staff at residential school, St. Peter's Anglican mission, Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta. Photo by M. J. C. Levason. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta, A14806.

"Right away, we had to take a bath and we don't really have long hair but the Sister just took the clippers to my head, shaved it all off. Why?"

—Colin Courteille, 80 years old. Attended St. Bernard IRS for six years. Recorded December 2003; quoted in *Métis Memories of Residential Schools: A Testament to the Strength of Métis* (2004).

The ambivalence towards Métis attendance at residential schools made the recording of Métis students inaccurate and poor-quality. In some cases, Métis students were never counted in records while, in others, Métis were counted as First Nations. It is impossible to know the exact numbers of Métis individuals who survived residential schools.

"We were trained like dogs—clap you get up, two claps you go eat, three claps maybe you go outside. We were trained, no talking, just like animals you know. It was wicked and they would make us go to mass. If you did something bad, the Sisters used to tell us 'You are savages, you don't know nothing. We've got your souls and unless you behave yourself, you won't get your soul back.' They used to scare you like that."

—Anonymous, 63 years old, quoted in *Métis Memories of Residential Schools: A Testament to the Strength of the Métis* (2004).



The truth of Métis experiences in residential schools is still not fully acknowledged.<sup>124</sup> It is important to know that most Métis did not receive compensation, despite having experienced trauma similar to that of the First Nations students who were their peers in residential schools.<sup>125</sup> In 1991, 19% of Métis in Alberta shared that they had survived residential schools.<sup>126</sup>

### Alberta Residential Schools

Name(s) of School	Location	Name(s) of School	Location
Assumption School, Hay Lakes	Assumption	Morley, Stony	Morley
Blue Quills, Saddle Lake, Sacred Heart	St. Paul	Old Sun	Gleichen
Crowfoot, St. Joseph's, St. Trinité	Cluny	Sacred Heart, Brocket	Brocket
Desmarais, Wabisca Lake, St. Martins, Wabisca Roman Catholic	Desmarais-Wabasca	St. Albert, Youville	Youville
Edmonton, Poundmaker	St. Albert	St. Augustine, Smoky River	Smoky River
Ermineskin	Hobbema	St. Cyprian's, Queen Victoria's Jubilee Home, Peigan	Brocket
Fort Vermilion, St. Henry's	Fort Vermilion	St. Joseph's Residential School, High River, Dunbow	High River
Grouard, St. Bernard's, Lesser Slave Lake Roman Catholic	Grouard	St. Mary's, Blood, Immaculate Conception	Cardston
Holy Angels, Fort Chipewyan, École des Saints-Anges	Fort Chipewyan	St. Paul's, Anglican/Church of England	Cardston
Joussard Indian Residential School, St. Bruno's	Joussard	Sarcee, St. Barnabas	T'suu Tina
Lac La Biche, Notre Dame des Victoire (later moved to become Blue Quills)	Lac La Biche	Sturgeon Lake, Calais, St. Francis Xavier	Calais
Lesser Slave Lake, St. Peter's	Lesser Slave Lake	Wabasca Anglican/Church of England, St. John's	Wabasca
		Whitefish Lake, St. Andrew's	Whitefish Lake

Figure 77. Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Residential School Locations  
<http://www.trc.ca/about-us/residential-school.html>.

There is work to do to better acknowledge distinct Métis experiences in residential schools, as well as other schools, such as the government- and church-funded day schools. The work of reconciliation with Métis because of their traumatic experiences in these schools is far from over.

Educators must be sensitive to the intergenerational impacts that Métis students and families might be facing today.

There is no way to measure the traumatic experiences that many Métis families have experienced.

The Métis know they are a strong people. A people who have felt the full weight of the federal government trying to eliminate them. A people who have exhibited strength and fortitude, time and time again.

—Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 163–4.



## Métis "Sixties Scoop" Experiences

For several generations, the Canadian government and several Canadian churches have pursued the "removal of Métis children from their parents and families." <sup>127</sup> From 1951 through to the 1980s, the Government of Canada developed and implemented a federal child welfare policy that involved the targeted removal of Métis children from their families, homes, and communities to "place them into middle-class families that were hundreds, sometimes thousands, of miles away from their families." <sup>128</sup> Some Indigenous children from families living in Canada were even taken to the United States of America.

Euro-Canadian government officials, social workers, lawyers, and judges believed that the ideal home for a Métis child was with a middle-class, non-Indigenous family. Many such non-Indigenous perspectives had roots in racist, discriminatory ideas about Métis people, which led to the idea that Métis families were inferior and incapable of raising their own children. These misinformed, harmful ideas have roots in the colonial, Eurocentric mindset that has guided many Canadian policies on Indigenous peoples.

The fundamental belief underlying this system was that being in middle-class, Euro-Canadian homes was in the best interests of the Métis child. However, many survivors of the Sixties Scoop have shared stories reporting abuse in all its forms and discrimination by their adoptive and fostering non-Métis families.

A lot of the families who adopted children through the Sixties Scoop program did so for the financial compensation and used the kids for labour.

—Métis National Council and Manitoba Métis Federation, "The Métis Nation Sixties Scoop Experience," YouTube video, 3:18-3:20, June 12, 2019, <https://youtu.be/9yOIIY4z9dg>.

Many of these survivors are still pursuing justice as they endure the impacts of being taken away from their families and communities. Many "children grew up in an environment that did not foster the growth of parenting and life skills," which has contributed to the socioeconomic difficulties that many Métis families navigate today. <sup>129</sup> While some Métis children grew up with Euro-Canadian families who provided loving homes, they were unable to learn about their distinct heritage, identity, culture, and traditions as Métis people.

The exact number of Métis children who have experienced temporary and long-term foster homes and adoptions during this period is yet to be determined. Some estimate that at least 20,000 Indigenous children have been systematically removed from their communities to be placed with non-Indigenous families. <sup>130</sup>

While many Indigenous children were delegated for adoption, many Métis children were targeted by families because of their fair skin.

—Métis National Council and Manitoba Métis Federation, "The Métis Nation Sixties Scoop Experience," YouTube video, 2:13, June 12, 2019, <https://youtu.be/9yOIIY4z9dg>.

Determining the full extent of the damage to the families affected by the Sixties Scoop is difficult. But there should be no question that taking so many children away from their families has consequences.

—Métis National Council and Manitoba Métis Federation, "The Métis Nation Sixties Scoop Experience," YouTube video, 6:37, June 12, 2019, <https://youtu.be/9yOIIY4z9dg>.



Across the Homeland, the Métis Nation is working to "help families that were torn apart reconnect."<sup>131</sup> In Alberta, Métis Child and Family Services aims to "improve the quality and effectiveness of social services to Métis children and families in need."<sup>132</sup> Their goal is to reduce the number of Métis and other Indigenous children coming into the care of Alberta Child and Youth services by providing alternate, family-centered intervention approaches and services that are "responsive and accountable to the community."<sup>133</sup>

We believe children, with the secure and caring guidance of family and culture, grow into healthy adults wanting to make a meaningful contribution to the families, communities and societies that they are a part of.

—Métis Child and Family Services, homepage,  
<http://www.metischild.com/2019Site/index.html>.

In 2018, the Métis National Council held an inaugural Métis Nation Sixties Scoop Symposium, which was followed up by a series of engagement sessions and a *What We Heard* report in 2019. The Métis Nation's Sixties Scoop website hosts a national database that allows people to share their stories and stay connected to the ongoing pursuit of justice. The website also features links and support for Métis survivors seeking to access provincial adoption records and services offered by each governing body of the Métis Nation.

"Only the Métis Nation knows the history of the Métis people; we need to educate the public, the government and the family coming home. Further, in addressing the wrongs of our past, we also want to look to the future. We feel the consequences of intergenerational trauma and we want that to end."

—Anonymous Métis Sixties Scoop survivor, quoted by the Métis Nation, *What We Heard: Report of the Métis Nation's Engagement with Métis Sixties Scoop Survivors* (Ottawa: Métis National Council, 2019), 12.

It is important that educators take time to reflect on the impacts that these policies may still be having on Métis families in their educational communities. Many of the Métis children who grew up in fostering and adoptive homes are now, as adults, able to learn about their culture and traditions. Others are still in the process of understanding and addressing internalized misinformed, racist ideas about Métis identity.

Understanding that Métis families could be facing a variety of impacts from these harmful policies is an important part of celebrating Métis culture and traditions in the classroom. Celebrating Métis identity and culture in the classroom is an important part of supporting Métis children as they reflect on and endure the impacts of the Sixties Scoop on their families.

"For every child that was lost, there is a mother who had a hole in her heart. Trees cannot grow if they don't have roots. Our children need to be proud of who they are and be taught about their families, culture, and history. We need to stand-up for our children today."

—Métis Sixties Scoop Survivor, quoted by Métis Nation of Alberta, "Métis Nation of Alberta Engages Métis Sixties Scoop Survivors," April 2, 2019, <https://albertametis.com/news/metis-nation-of-alberta-engages-metis-sixties-scoop-survivors/>.



Figure 78. Métis Seniors and Children beading at Métis Crossing. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.



## Fort Vermilion & Buttertown

Métis history in the north-west Peace River region has been flourishing since the late 1700s. The Peace River was a primary waterway connecting these northern communities to kinship and trading partners throughout the prairies. Fort Vermilion, Dunvegan, Boyer River, and the town of Peace River were all key gathering places for Métis to trade with the HBC and NWC.



Figure 79. View of Fort Vermilion from the ferry tower, ca. late 1800s. Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta, A5383.

The people who were not post employees but who made their homes in the Fort Vermilion area appeared in local records as the "Settlers." These were mostly, but not all, Metis families.

—Theresa A. Ferguson, "The Lizottes of Fort Vermilion and the Pre-1900 Evolution of a Métis Community," *Alberta History* 56, no. 4 (2008): 14.

Fort Vermilion is one of the oldest places of settlement in Alberta. The region began as a trading community for the NWC, and a fort was established in 1788. Fort Vermilion was a large community hub for Métis in the region. Many came to work as traders and farmers, as agricultural production had been present in the area from the inception of the fur trade on the Peace River.



Figure 80. Children of William and Elise Lambert, née Lizotte, Fort Vermilion, ca. 1900–1906. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives NA-2502–29.



In 1805, the region now known as Dunvegan was formally recognized by the NWC as a trade centre between the Métis, First Nations, and non-Indigenous people through the creation of an official company trade post. The NWC post was transferred to the HBC when they formally merged in 1821. Over the years, the primarily Métis post became quite prosperous. In 1878, Fort Dunvegan became the temporary headquarters of the HBC's Athabasca District.

Between 1881 and 1891, the population in the region tripled, and the number of households in Fort Vermilion alone increased from 9 to 25.<sup>134</sup> This was largely due to the influx of Métis families searching for refuge after being displaced by Euro-Canadian settlers and governments across the Homeland.

Many of the families that came to the region settled in Buttertown. The river lot system of Buttertown reflects the community's Métis roots and remains a neighbouring community to Métis in Fort Vermilion to this day.

Across the Peace River from Fort Vermilion was a farming community of Métis families. "[I]t was known as Buttertown for the dairy farm that was operated from 1870 by the Lizottes, a well-known Metis family of the Fort Vermilion area."

—Lawrence Barkwell, *Métis Homeland: Its Settlements and Communities* (Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute, 2016), 23.

Buttertown is an important part of history for both Métis and non-Métis communities in the area. Families used the river lot system to organize their community, just as they had throughout the Métis Homeland. The community produced butter in large quantities for trade with the HBC and others throughout the northern region.<sup>135</sup> Navigating the Peace River for trade was a key strength of Métis, as they operated trade beyond that of butter through the region. Throughout their history, the residents of the Buttertown area established, a church, a pool hall, a school, stores, sawmills, and flour mills.<sup>136</sup>

Buttertown's first pool hall, built by Augustus Lizotte on River Lot 7, was moved to lots 9, 13, and then the La Fleur's family lot, number 14.

—Mackenzie Frontier, *Fort Vermilion Historical Guide*, n.d, 14,  
<https://mackenziefrontier.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/FV-Historical-Guide.pdf>.



Figure 81. River lot #8. Maggie Jane Lambert's house, built in 1902 (dovetailed log house), Cranna Toews, Marilee, Collection. Photo courtesy of Fort Vermilion Heritage Centre, Accession No.: 995.57.32.



## Métis in Fort Vermilion & Buttertown Today

Fort Vermilion is still an important gathering place for Métis families today. Métis in Alberta remember and celebrate their family connections in the Fort Vermilion area. Stories recall connections between Fort Vermilion and other neighbouring locations, such as Carcajou, Keg River, Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement, and La Crete.

“Metis life here in Fort Vermilion, in some ways, is the same as it was in the days of my elders. We still hunt, fish for food, pick berries and some gather plants like wild mint and rat root for our use. Our ancestral hunting grounds have been disappearing steadily due to farming and logging, so we are forced to move farther from our old grounds to hunt moose. Sometimes we are allowed to hunt bison to the west of us, but only in the years the government allows. We still share anything that we harvest with our families and elders.”

—Lizotte Napew, Métis community member in Fort Vermilion, personal communication with RCTL, August 12, 2020.

There are over twenty-five historical sites and buildings to view in Fort Vermilion that are a part of remembering and reflecting on Métis history. St Luke’s Anglican Church Cemetery, dating back to 1877, is one location where Métis names and stories are remembered.

The Old Bay House, constructed between 1906 and 1908 as the HBC factor’s house, is still standing on its original location in Alberta.<sup>137</sup> Buildings such as this one are part of the remembering of Métis economic strengths and strategic partnerships across Alberta.



Figure 82. Old Bay House, HBC post in Fort Vermilion. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives NA-3471-29.



Figure 83. Old Bay House today. Photo courtesy of Fort Vermilion Heritage Centre, 2A.

The community holds a number of special events every summer, including a rodeo, the Town ‘n’ Country Fair, and River Daze.<sup>138</sup> The town continues to cherish and celebrate the roots of their families in both Fort Vermilion and Buttertown, as many of the buildings established by the community are still standing.



## Peace River

The industry of Métis families was recognized by Euro-Canadian settlement in 1792, when Fort Fork was developed by the NWC, approximately 10 miles upriver from the present-day town of Peace River.<sup>139</sup> The fort is recognized as having hosted explorer Alexander Mackenzie through the Peace River waterway. In addition to their activities as voyagers, Métis were fur traders, employees, guides, and interpreters in partnership with Euro-Canadians through this area.<sup>140</sup> Although Mackenzie is recognized as being the first explorer to reach the Pacific Ocean, he would have not accomplished this without the skilled, professional work of the Métis who aided him.

Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, many Métis sought refuge from their experiences of being displaced by Euro-Canadians throughout the Homeland. The Peace River became an essential means of transport for Métis, connecting them with kin across the Homeland via waterways between northern Alberta and British Columbia.<sup>141</sup> Métis have for generations made use of the River and the surrounding region. The confluence of the Peace River, Smoky River, Heart River, and Pat's Creek acted as an optimal location for trade and travel. Métis in Alberta shared kinship and connection via the waterways that surrounded Peace River, Fort Vermilion, and Dunvegan and into the Lesser Slave Lake region. Living with their kin at Peace River allowed Métis to continue their traditional ways of life, connected to their community, and to lead the fur trade economy throughout the Homeland.



Glenbow Archives NA-2812-14  
Figure 84. Canoes crossing the Peace River, Alberta. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-2812-14.

For more than a century Métis staffed the Canmore brigades that plied the Peace River the fur trade's lifeline into the New Caledonia District of northern British Columbia.

—EXCEleration Corp & CONTEXT, *The Voyage Has Begun: The Métis Millennium Voyage Tourism Feasibility Study* (N.p., 2000), 61.

"I came to this country in 1920 with my dad, who was a miner in Frank, Alberta. We decided to come to the Peace River to see the country, so we loaded a railroad car with six horses and machinery. From Edmonton to Grande Prairie, it took us two weeks by rail. We were delayed one week at Smith, Alberta, because the railroad had washed out at Slave Lake, causing us to unload and reload to get to Grande Prairie. It took another eight days with horses and wagons to get to Pouce Coupe. We looked around but didn't take any land. In February 1921 we went back to Frank. In March we came back to the Peace River with the rest of the family—mother, brother, sister, dad, and I—to stay."

—Gus Dumont, 18-021, South Peace Historical Society, <https://calverley.ca/article/18-021-gus-dumont/>.



## Métis in Peace River Today

Peace River continues to be a gathering place for Métis throughout the surrounding areas. Kinship ties and connections between the communities across the waterways still exist for the Métis living in the region. The Town of Peace River itself is the home of the Métis Nation of Alberta Region 6 office.



Figure 85. Métis and Treaty 8 Flags being raised at Peace River School. Photo courtesy of <http://www.cfweradio.ca/news/alberta-news/peace-river-schools-to-display-treaty>.



Figure 86. Permanent Installation of Métis and Treaty 8 Flags in Peace River Council Chambers. Photo courtesy of <https://peacriver.ca/permanent-installation-of-treaty-8-and-metis-flags/>.

The Town of Peace River has increasingly recognized the historical presence of the Métis and First Nations within the area and now has the flags of both the Métis Nation and Treaty 8 permanently installed in the Council Chambers. The same has been done at schools throughout the Peace River School Division. Chair Darren Kuester said that they want to “honour traditional land, Indigenous culture, and to impact change and support reconciliation through education.”<sup>142</sup>

In January 2013, BC Hydro published an Environmental Impact Statement for a proposed hydro-electricity project that would be developed on the Peace River in Métis Region 6. This document provided research done on the role of the river in both historical and contemporary Métis ways of life. The Métis Nation of Alberta Region 6 asserted that their economy, for both sustenance and commercial gain, was historically based on trapping, hunting, and fishing in the area. This area continues to be of importance to their economy today.<sup>143</sup>

One family stated that they used the Peace River all year for their income and traditional activities. All participants stated that they used the Peace River for family gatherings and ceremonies.

–“Community Summary: Métis Nation of Alberta Region 6,” in *Site C Clean Energy- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)*, submitted by BC Hydro to the British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. Prepared by Fasken Martineau for BC Hydro Power and Authority (Vancouver: British Columbia, 2013), [https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/documents\\_staticpost/63919/85328/Vol5\\_Appendix-Meits\\_Nation\\_of\\_Alberta.pdf](https://iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/documents_staticpost/63919/85328/Vol5_Appendix-Meits_Nation_of_Alberta.pdf).



## Metis Settlements in Alberta

Beyond the twelve community histories and stories highlighted above, it is essential that educators build their foundational knowledge about the unique story of Métis Settlements in Alberta. One key understanding is that Alberta is the only province or territory with legislated land set aside for Métis. Today, 114,350 people self-identify as Métis in Alberta, and 6,500 people live in the eight Settlements spread across 1.25 million acres of land in northern Alberta.<sup>144</sup> These sections of land are allocated for Métis to live together, celebrating their traditions and culture.

This part of the theme will provide educators with an understanding as to why the Métis in Alberta advocated to have their lands recognized and how the Settlements were established, and offer a glimpse into Métis life on Settlements today. This resource is designed to support foundational knowledge, and educators are encouraged to reach out to the communities themselves and learn more.

### Establishing the Metis Settlements

By the early 1900s, Métis across Alberta had experienced displacement and dispossession of their lands for several generations. The Métis collectively lobbied the Government of Alberta to acknowledge the needs of the Métis communities in the province. This led to the establishment of the *Royal Commission on the Condition of the Halfbreed Population of the Province of Alberta* in 1934. This became more commonly known as the **Ewing Commission**, named after the primary commissioner, Justice Alfred Freeman Ewing. The Commission investigated a collection of data amassed from questionnaire responses, a history of the scrip program in Alberta, and medical reports collected through a series of meetings with Métis around central and northern Alberta.<sup>145</sup>

The Ewing Commission investigations concluded in 1938. Though the investigations were fraught with racist, paternalistic ideas towards the Métis, the final report identified the needs among Métis communities for education, healthcare, and land.<sup>146</sup> As a response to these recommendations, the Government of Alberta passed the ***Metis Population Betterment Act, 1938***.



Glenbow Archives PA-2218-189

This legislation allowed for twelve tracts of land to be identified through a series of Government Orders-In-Council. The Act also defined regulations for **governance** regarding hunting, trapping, building standards, grazing, use of road allowances, and other matters. It recognized these lands set aside for Métis as Settlements, represented by Government-created Settlement Associations.<sup>147</sup>

Figure 87. Mrs. Louis Garneau and Mrs. Louis Lariviere at Wolf Lake, Alberta, 1942. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, PA-2218-189.

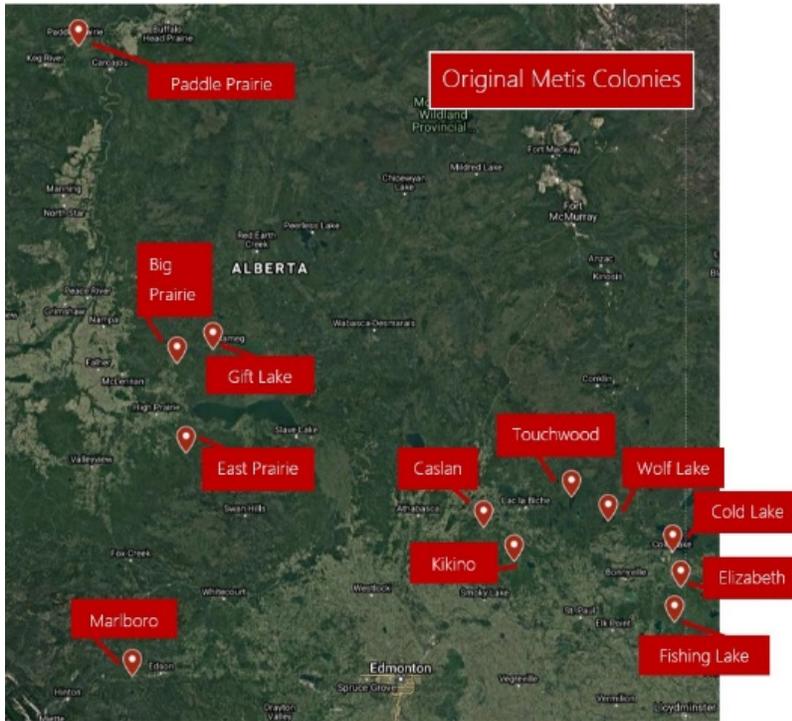
Figure 88. Joe Dion meets with community members at Elizabeth Settlement, ca. 1939. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-5127-2.



Glenbow Archives NA-5127-2



Each tract of land was constituted by the *Metis Population Betterment Act, 1938* as a “Metis Improvement District,” and the Minister of the day was empowered to assign each of the areas a number and a title.<sup>148</sup> However, the Métis communities either already knew or came to know these lands as “colonies” with various meaningful names in their own languages (as listed below) throughout the next few generations.<sup>149</sup>



Twelve Original  
Metis Colonies

- Paddle Prairie - Big Prairie
- Gift Lake – East Prairie
- Marlboro – Kikino
- Caslan – Touchwood
- Cold Lake – Elizabeth
- Fishing Lake– Wolf Lake

Figure 89. Map courtesy of Google Maps.

The Government of Alberta appointed a Metis Committee, who organized Settlement Associations as allowed for in the *Metis Population Betterment Act, 1938*. The Settlement Associations were entrusted with the governance of the lands constituted as Metis Improvement Districts, otherwise known as “Metis Colonies” at the time. The Métis Association of Alberta’s leadership was not acknowledged by the Government of Alberta as an authoritative body for Métis in the province, despite the work they had done sending their elected representatives to the Government.<sup>150</sup> A review of correspondence between Métis leaders and the Government illustrates how Métis were effectively displaced from leading their own people.<sup>151</sup>

Each of the Settlements has a unique story about its history and establishment. One story illustrates the figurative distance that the Government’s Metis Committee had from the community. One of the districts set aside for Métis comprised four townships grouped in west-central Alberta, named by the Government’s Metis Committee “Goodfish Lake Colony #7” on March 29, 1938. By 1941, the community themselves knew the land as “Kikino,” a Cree word meaning “our home.”<sup>152</sup>

On July 15, 1941, head commissioner of the Metis Committee Frank Buck planned to offer five townships of land to Métis veterans returning from service in World War II. They instead returned to where their families were.<sup>153</sup> Over the next decade, the set-aside land became four townships and opened as a distinct Métis community area, known by names such as “Kikino West” and “Caslan.”<sup>154</sup> In the *Metis Settlements Act, 1990*, the land was formally acknowledged as “Buffalo Lake.”



Figure 90. Meeting of Métis Settlement officials, ca. 1939–1965. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-5198-62.

With the establishment of the colonies, some Métis families moved from around the province into new areas that were chosen for them. The original *Metis Population Betterment Act, 1938* defined Settlement governance parallel to the Euro-Canadian government framework instead of allowing Métis to design it in a way that best suited their community and culture. Subsequent amendments in the next few decades decreased Métis **autonomy** and increased provincial control of Métis families on their land.<sup>155</sup>

One primary way the Government of Alberta maintained control of Métis families was by limiting the authority of Métis leaders over their communities and, instead, assigning a supervisor to protect and manage Métis life in their communities, such as their work, houses, roads, and infrastructure.

Throughout the next few decades, Métis worked to build their communities. Despite a variety of issues with the supervisors and government control in their communities, Métis were determined to build a strong community for their families. They built schools, churches, and administration offices. They also constructed roads and developed agriculture to support their communities. They continued to gather with Métis from around the province at events such as the Métis Association of Alberta's Annual General Assemblies and the annual Lac Ste. Anne Pilgrimage.

Throughout the next two decades, the Government of Alberta increased their paternalistic control of Métis communities, including the closure of four colonies:



Figure 91. Arista Carifelle and family in front of the house he built himself, Big Prairie Métis Settlement, ca. 1939–1965. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, NA-5198-6.



Figure 92. Louis Lariviere handling horse team pulling load of logs, Wolf Lake Métis Settlement, 1942. Photo courtesy of Glenbow Archives, PA-2218-208.

Annie (Dolly) Collins was the first female secretary treasurer for the Métis Association of Alberta in 1961–1967. She was also an active and conscientious member of the Elizabeth Settlement, where she worked as the secretary for the Elizabeth Council from 1958 to 1969.

"[S]he became the first woman to sit on the Council itself. Despite the fact that she had a large family, she gave freely of her time in the interest of the community and the Métis people."

—Norma Collins, personal communication with Karen Collins and RCTL, October 31, 2020; Albina Jacknife, *Elizabeth Métis Settlement: A Local History* (1977), 48.



Marlboro (rescinded 1941), Touchwood (rescinded 1940), Wolf Lake (rescinded 1960), and Cold Lake (rescinded 1956).<sup>156</sup> With these changes, Métis were once again forcibly displaced and dispossessed of their homes, joining their kin in neighbouring colonies and communities.

Despite the advocacy of the Métis Association of Alberta and the Métis of the colonies, the Government of Alberta would not address the issues Métis were facing on their lands. The leaders in the Métis Association of Alberta and across the colonies discussed the next steps towards protecting the land, autonomy, and legal rights of the distinct Métis communities on colony lands.<sup>157</sup> In 1975, the Settlement Associations established the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements Association, commonly known at the time as the “Federation of Metis Settlements.”<sup>158</sup>

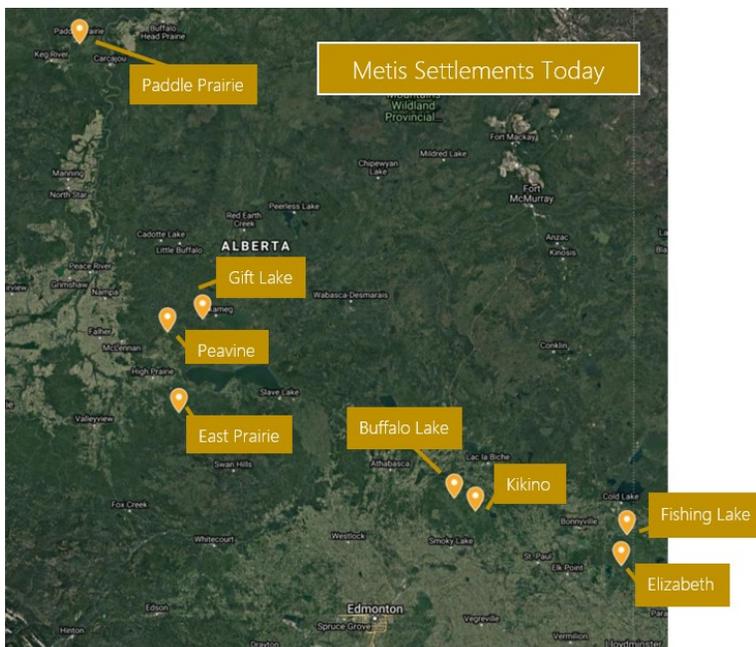
Over the next twenty years, the Federation of Metis Settlements advocated for Métis community members living on the Settlements. In 1990, four key pieces of legislation were signed: *Metis Settlements Act*, *Metis Settlements Land Protection Act*, *Metis Settlements Accord Implementation Act*, and the *Constitution of Alberta Amendment Act*. The *Metis Settlements Act* established the Metis Settlements General Council and acknowledged the Settlements by names that the Settlement communities chose collectively.<sup>159</sup> This movement allowed Métis living in these communities to have more control of their own destiny and the financial support required to do it.

“What we want is land. . . land where we could build our homes so we could be in a permanent place where our children could attend school. I do not want my inheritance loaned to me. I want to own it in a way that nobody can take it away from me.”

–Adrian Hope, interview with Murray Dobbin, 1976, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/01151>.

Metis Settlement members have a deep, spiritual connection to the land. It is the foundation upon which our people build their lives and practice their traditions and culture. The land is a gift and our people are trustees who protect it to pass on to future generations.

–Metis Settlements General Council, <https://msgc.ca/about-us/>.



### Eight Metis Settlements Today

- Paddle Prairie – Gift Lake
- Peavine - East Prairie
- Buffalo Lake – Kikino
- Elizabeth – Fishing Lake

Figure 93. Photo courtesy of Google Maps.



## Life on Metis Settlements Today

Métis families on the eight Metis Settlements today continue to live in the distinct and traditional Métis cultural ways. Life is celebrated in lively gatherings with fiddle tunes and jigging. Families continue to hunt and trap, and to teach and speak the languages traditionally spoken by Métis, such as Cree and Michif.<sup>160</sup>

The Metis Settlements General Council (MSGC) is the central governing authority of the Metis Settlements, collectively ensuring that the needs and interests of all Settlement members are cared for. Each Settlement has a variety of services and facilities. Educators are invited to learn more about Metis Settlements by reading the published resources wherein members have shared their stories about life on the Settlements.

Every year, all eight Settlements close their facilities to remember and celebrate Proclamation Day, which took place on November 1, 1990. They also remember their homes lost when the Settlements were rescinded in the mid-1900s in annual events such as Cultural Days, a two-day culture camp for schools and industry partners hosted by Elizabeth and Fishing Lake Settlements in the lands once designated as Wolf Lake Metis Settlement.

This section invites educators to glimpse into the lives of Métis living on Settlements today. Each Settlement has a unique story to tell. They are unified in their celebration of Métis identity, culture, and traditions, and in their family connections with Métis around Alberta and the Homeland.



Figure 94. Metis Settlements General Council Flag waiting to be raised at the opening of Fishing Lake Metis Settlement's new Administrative Building. Photo courtesy of Kimberley Fraser-Airhart, RCTL, June 2018.

## Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement

Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement is the largest of the eight Metis settlements, located just south of High Level.<sup>161</sup> The area has also been known as "Keg River."<sup>162</sup> This resilient community is hard-working and lively, enjoying Métis traditions and recreational activities like baseball, hockey, and rodeo. There are a variety of local services, such as a library, Seniors Centre, Parent Link, Brighter Futures, Health Clinic, and a Youth Centre. Paddle Prairie School offers education for Early Childhood Services to Grade 12 students from the Settlement, Carcajou, and Keg River.

The population of Paddle Prairie is approximately 800 with many more calling it home, as it is a community of families and memories. The traditional lands of Paddle Prairie are vast, and the community still practices many of the traditions today.

—Paddle Prairie Metis Settlement,  
<https://paddleprairiemetis.com/>.



Paddle Prairie has established over 300 solar panels powering many of their buildings. Many Métis in the community are contractors for services such as timber harvesting, natural gas production, and farming in and around the Settlement.

Figure 95. Sign in front of Mickey's Gas Bar on Paddle Prairie Settlement. Photo courtesy of Paddle Prairie,  
<https://paddleprairiemetis.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Store.jpg>.



Figure 96. Metis youth at Gift Lake install one of two signs that they collectively designed for the community. Photo courtesy of <https://indigenousclimatehub.ca/tag/gift-lake-metis-settlement/>.

## Gift Lake Metis Settlement

The Métis community in Gift Lake has known the land they live on for generations, since even before the established recognition of Métis lands through the creation of the Settlements.<sup>163</sup> This community is located on Utikuma Lake, north of Grouard, and shares a border with Peavine Metis Settlement in the area known by the community as the “Tri-Settlement Area.”<sup>164</sup> It is home to approximately 650 people, who continue to celebrate their traditions, care for each other, and care for the land. Many community members speak Cree.

“...nothing connects us more to our culture than the land...”

—Anonymous Métis Elder of Gift Lake, quoted in <https://indigenousclimatehub.ca/tag/gift-lake-metis-settlement/>.

The Gift Lake community has an industrious leadership. They are involved in forestry, farming, road construction, retail, hospitality, and business management in Gift Lake and surrounding communities.<sup>165</sup> The youth have been involved in leading care for the land through partnership with the Indigenous Community-Based Climate Monitoring Program. The community of Gift Lake has also organized many services to care for each other, including a K-9 school, water treatment plant, recreation centre, and public health services.



Figure 97. Gift Lake Metis Culture Camp, February 10, 2020. Photo courtesy of <https://indigenousclimatehub.ca/tag/gift-lake-metis-settlement/>.



Figure 98. Peavine Metis Settlement sign. Photo courtesy of David Fortin, <https://metisarchitect.com/2015/06/09/peavine-settlement/>.

## Peavine Metis Settlement

The Métis community in Peavine Settlement, located northwest of Grouard, is home to over 900 people. They share a border with Gift Lake Metis Settlement in the area known by the community as the “Tri-Settlement Area.”<sup>166</sup> Métis in the Settlement have been celebrating their culture and sharing their traditions across every generation.

Many Métis here speak Cree and live out traditions like hunting, fishing, trapping, meat drying, fish smoking, **hide tanning**, and berry picking.<sup>167</sup> They are involved in local industries, contributing to the Settlement and provincial economy in construction, forestry, agriculture, logging, transportation, and oil and gas development. Some also have investments in resource development and are fostering a community focus on tourism and hospitality.<sup>168</sup>



One celebrated tradition and memory in the Peavine community is their success in national championships in hockey and baseball throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Peavine Metis Settlement, like Métis from across the province, have cherished their sports teams for generations.

"They used to let us camp in that area and we'd pitch up our tents and whole families would come and there would be a big gathering with big crowds,' said Anderson. 'Our team used to camp and we'd bring our moose meat and bannock. One of the things I can say about our team then is we were all locals from Peavine.'"

—Elmer Anderson, 2020, interviewed by Ted Clarke, "Peavine pitcher, Regina catcher keeping Canada Day tradition alive," *Prince George Citizen*, June 30, 2018, <https://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/peavine-pitcher-regina-catcher-keeping-canada-day-tradition-alive-1.23354448>.

## East Prairie Metis Settlement

East Prairie Metis Settlement is home for just under 1000 people, located just south of Grouard and Lesser Slave Lake in the area known by the community as the "Tri-Settlement area." <sup>169</sup> This community continues to live and share the traditions and culture of their history with their youth today. Activities like hunting and trapping are popular activities for families in the area.

In addition to traditional harvesting economies, Métis in the area contribute to industries such as forestry, oil and gas, transportation, and construction on the Settlement and in the area. <sup>170</sup> The community has established a transportation network and a variety of services for their families, such as Hillview School, a play area, youth centre, a daycare, a water treatment plant, a lift station, a lagoon, natural gas, electrical supply, a fire hall, and a health centre. <sup>171</sup>

"I think it was 1944 that we started fighting for a school and teachers. That was right off the bat, right after we got here, because I had children of school age and the Bellerose's also had a lot of them... The government realized we were determined people. They didn't like the idea of a log school, but promised that if we kept on logging, they would hire a portable sawmill to saw the logs. From there we could build a frame school."

—Maurice L'Hirondelle, quoted in *Constance Brissenden, Memories of a Metis Settlement* (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 2018), 56.



The Wildland Firefighters are a professionally designated Métis group from East Prairie, who are celebrated by the Settlement and the Province of Alberta. This team has contributed to supporting communities around Canada impacted by wildfires, including Quebec in 2018 and northern Alberta in 2019.

Figure 99. Metis Settlements General Council (@MSGC\_Alberta), "Thinking about a brave crew . . .," Twitter post, July 13, 2018. Photo courtesy of [https://twitter.com/MSGC\\_Alberta/status/1017807623008104449?s=20](https://twitter.com/MSGC_Alberta/status/1017807623008104449?s=20).



## Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement

Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement is a community located just north of Smoky Lake. It shares a border with Kikino Metis Settlement and is home to over 1,200 people.<sup>172</sup> This area has been home to Métis families for several generations.



The Settlement established a gathering place to commemorate the sacrifices of Métis who served in the World Wars. They also have a water treatment plant, recreation facility and grounds, a Head Start building, a training centre, a fire hall, a public works shop, a Seniors Centre, and a Family Centre for their community members to access as needed.<sup>173</sup> Most evenings, community members provide language and culture classes for their children to continue celebrating their traditions.<sup>174</sup>

Figure 100. Métis War Veterans Memorial in Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement. Photo courtesy of David Fortin, <https://metisarchitect.com/2015/06/09/buffalo-lake-settlement/>.

Active youth participation in Settlement life and activities is an important aspect of Buffalo Lake's foundation. Youth take pride in their community, participating in summer work projects and sporting activities. This positive foundation has been instrumental to the numerous achievements made by Settlement members.

—Metis Settlements General Council, *Making History*, 19.

The Buffalo Lake community is involved in a variety of industries, and many are entrepreneurs in the surrounding area.<sup>175</sup> They also invite the surrounding communities to an annual rodeo.

Figure 101. Buffalo Lake Rodeo. Photo courtesy of Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement, <https://buffalolakems.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/scan0006.jpg>.



## Kikino Metis Settlement

The Kikino Métis community has known this area by a few other names including “Goodfish Lake” and “Beaver River.”<sup>176</sup> It is home to over 1,000 people who work hard and celebrate life together. It is located just south of Lac La Biche, sharing a border with Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement. Kikino has a variety of local amenities, such as a general store with gas and food services, health services, potable water delivery, a fire department, and a post office.<sup>177</sup>

Figure 102. Kikino Metis Settlement sign. Photo courtesy of <https://welltraxx.com/portfolio/kikino-metis-settlement/>.



Kikino has a few unique features, including the Kikino Silver Birch Resort and Campground, the Kikino Silver Birch Rodeo, Kikino Wildlife Ranch Association, and the Kikino Northern Lights Dancers.<sup>178</sup>

Kikino Silver Birch Resort and Campground was dedicated in memory of Kikino Métis Elder Adrian Hope, who advocated for Métis on Settlements. He is also remembered as the second President of the Métis Association of Alberta (1960–1967), a historian, and a poet.

Adrian saw and often talked about the area's tourism potential and wanted the people of the Kikino Metis Settlement to benefit economically from the land.



–Kikino Silver Birch, n.d. <https://www.kikinosilverbirch.ca/about>.

The Kikino Metis Elders are a passionate collective, who work to ensure that all children in the Settlement can learn about their language, culture, and history. In 1978, they started the Kikino Northern Lights Dancers, who have danced locally, provincially, and nationally.

Figure 103. Kikino Silver Birch Resort and Campground. Photo courtesy of David Fortin, <https://metisarchitecture.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/campground-cabins.jpg>.

## Fishing Lake Metis Settlement

Fishing Lake is located along the eastern border of Alberta, about 50 km south of Cold Lake, sharing a border with Elizabeth Metis Settlement. It has been a key gathering place for the Métis Nation through many generations. By 1895, at least 150 Métis people were gathered there, living on the land, working hard, and celebrating Métis culture and traditions.



Figure 104. Fishing Lake Metis Settlement sign. Photo by Kimberley Fraser-Airhart, RCTL, 2018.

Some of the earliest Fishing Lake residents came from Edmonton as early as 1807 and Fort Chipewyan as early as 1819. Although fur trade was a dominant industry, Fishing Lake Metis Settlement earned the name "Packechawanis" or "Puktawhanis," meaning "a small place for netting" due to the abundance of jumbo whitefish and served as a historic fishing camp.

–Fishing Lake Metis Settlement, <https://flms.ca/our-culture/history/>.

Fishing Lake today is home to over 400 people.<sup>179</sup> There is an unincorporated townsite in the Settlement called "Sputinow." The community has established a cemetery, Communiplex, Seniors Lodge, Headstart, Veterans Park with a memorial statue, and an administration building. Most of the homes, though, are spread around the Settlement land.

In addition to agriculture, families continue to live out their traditions of hunting, trapping, and fishing. They continue to be passionate hard workers and leaders in a variety of fields, such as education, sports, politics, resource development, and entrepreneurship.<sup>180</sup>



"My Mother taught me to tan hides, make moccasins and jackets, and bead. I still do quite a bit of that work when I can get good hides. I made braided rugs, sew and knit also."

—Harriet Bruneau, Fishing Lake Metis Settlement, quoted in Louise Horstman and David May, *Tired of Rambling: A History of Fishing Lake Metis Settlement* (N.p.: Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements Associations, 1982), 61.

Figure 105. Artwork in the Fishing Lake Communiplex, nearby the Senior Center. Photo by Kimberley Fraser-Airhart, RCTL, 2018.



Figure 106. Elizabeth Metis Settlement Administration Building. Photo by Kimberley Fraser-Airhart, RCTL, 2020.

## Elizabeth Metis Settlement

Elizabeth Metis Settlement is home to over 600 people. It shares a border with Fishing Lake Metis Settlement and Saskatchewan. It is the smallest settlement of all the eight located in north-eastern Alberta, just south of the City of Cold Lake.

When it was established, the name “Elizabeth” was chosen in honour of Joe Dion’s wife, Elizabeth Dion, as he was a passionate leader amongst Métis and served the Métis Nation for many years.

The Métis community in Elizabeth continues to celebrate their traditions, such as diamond willow walking stick-making, teachings about the sash, jigging, and speaking Métis languages such as Cree and Michif.

Our culture is rooted in the way our elders lived their day to day lives; their knowledge and expertise will continue to be unique and practical.

—Elizabeth Metis Settlement, <https://elizabethms.ca/culture/>.

"Lived on Settlements since 1980, to live here, there was no road . . . came through the trail to clear the land and build a house here. We started building this place in 1980, before the house was complete, we lived in a [Trapper's] tent."

—Emilé and Edna Blyan, personal communication with RCTL, September 29, 2020.

The community has worked hard to foster a variety of services for their families, including education, sports, health, housing, family services, child services, daycare, emergency services, religious facilities, public works, water treatment facilities, and community events like Fun Days and a Family Day Fishing Derby.<sup>181</sup> Every year, Elizabeth Metis Settlement and Fishing Lake Metis Settlement co-host a culture camp for their youth at Wolf Lake (which was a former Metis Colony). Métis in the area are also involved in local entrepreneurship in industries such as the energy sector, investment holdings, retail, and resource development.



Figure 107. Elizabeth Settlement's Baseball team. Photo courtesy of Kimberley Fraser-Airhart, RCTL, 2020.



# Métis Life in Alberta Today

Today there are over 114,370 self-identified Métis living in virtually every community in Alberta.<sup>182</sup> Approximately 45,000 are registered citizens of the Métis Nation of Alberta, and the numbers continue to grow.<sup>183</sup> Of these, 6,500 people live on Métis Settlements.<sup>184</sup> Métis across the province of Alberta—in rural, urban, or Settlement communities—celebrate their traditions, share their histories, and contribute to building the Métis Nation.

The Métis have an extensive collection of stories that tell of their histories, culture, languages, and traditions, which connect them to the lands they know as home throughout Alberta. Stories from Métis history, contemporary ways, and Métis Settlements provide a glimpse into Métis life across the province and offer an invitation to educators to continuing learning more.



Figure 108. Lilyrose Meyers, Métis storyteller and Knowledge Keeper, works at Métis Crossing, sharing Métis history and culture with all visitors. Photo courtesy of Métis Crossing.



Figure 109. Métis children jigging at a celebration at Métis Crossing. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.



Figure 110. A sign welcoming Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement families home after an evacuation due to extreme wild fires. Photo courtesy of Larry Wong, Post Media, <https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/photos-metis-settlement-residents-return-home-after-wildfire>.



These stories are foundational to understanding Métis in Alberta. Métis families today celebrate their culture and strength while also continuing to endure the impacts of historical injustices. Métis care for each other through every stage and need in life. They protect and share their history and create their stories today, living their traditions and sharing them with younger generations.

Figure 111. President Audrey Poitras honours a Métis student with a sash. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.



## Conclusion

The Métis in Alberta story is a weaving together of many family stories and industrious leadership. The traditional stories, cultural practices, and ways of being have unified the Métis Nation throughout their history across the Homeland. Cultural lifeways like the **Red River Jig**, fiddle tunes, language diversity, the creative construction of the **Red River Cart**, and faith traditions have strengthened Métis kinship networks in every location dense with Métis history. The community stories explored in this document offer a glimpse into Métis lifeways amongst the plethora of communities that were not explored as closely.

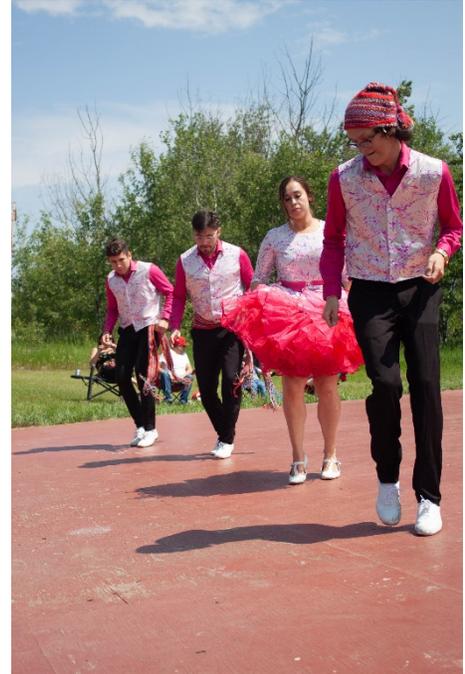


Figure 112. Métis Child and Family Jiggers. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

Figure 113. Louis Riel Memorial Walk. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

Many of the distinct experiences of the Métis throughout their history continue to impact the story that Métis live out today. They are resiliently determining the history of their Nation, families, and communities in Alberta. Through both formal leadership and community initiatives, Métis are addressing the historical injustices that their families have experienced for generations at the hands of Canadian governments. Métis are also addressing contemporary discrimination that their families suffer to this day. They are continuing to tell their history and share their culture through the various regions of the Métis Nation.



Figure 114. Canoe at Métis Crossing. Photo courtesy of Métis Nation of Alberta.

Today, the Métis in Alberta work hard to advocate for each other while celebrating their independence via self-governance and **self-determination**.

The story of the Métis in Alberta must be known as one of pride, community, networking, kinship, celebration, storytelling, traditions, mobility, adaptability across the Homeland, and resilience amidst the experiences of many injustices.



## Notes

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- <sup>2</sup> Métis Nation of Alberta, "Background," <http://www.albertaMetisgov.com/background/>.
- <sup>3</sup> World Health Organization, "Displaced People," [https://www.who.int/environmental\\_health\\_emergencies/displaced\\_people/en/](https://www.who.int/environmental_health_emergencies/displaced_people/en/).
- <sup>4</sup> Alberta Teachers Association, "A Note on Terminology," *Walking Together for Reconciliation*, 2. <https://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/For%20Members/ProfessionalDevelopment/Walking%20Together/PD-WT-16a%20-%20Terminology.pdf>.
- <sup>5</sup> Darren R. Préfontaine, Patrick Young, Todd Paquin, and Leah Dorion, *Métis Fur Trade Employees, Free Traders, Guides and Scouts (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2003)*, 3, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/00713.M%C3%A9tis%20Fur%20Trade.pdf>.
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- <sup>8</sup> EXCEleration Corp & CONTEXT, *The Voyage Has Begun: The Métis Millennium Voyage Tourism Feasibility Study* (N.p., 2000), <https://dokument.pub/borderlands-to-bordered-lands-metis-katie-pollock-flipbook-pdf.html>.
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- <sup>10</sup> Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935, *Mark of the Métis* (Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada, 2012), 88.
- <sup>11</sup> Paul Gareau and Jeanine LeBlanc, "Pilgrimage and Peoplehood: Indigenous Relations and Self-Determination at Catholic Pilgrimage Sites in Mi'kma'ki and the Métis Homeland," *Material Religion* 17 no. 5: 1.
- <sup>12</sup> Métis Nation, *What We Heard: Report of the Métis Nation's Engagement with Métis Sixties Scoop Survivors* (Ottawa: Métis National Council, 2019), 14.
- <sup>13</sup> Dwayne Trevor Donald, "Edmonton Pentimento: Rereading History in the Case of the Papaschase Cree," *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* 2, no. 1 (2004): 23.
- <sup>14</sup> Lawrence Gervais, MNA Region 3 President, personal communication with RCTL, August 10, 2020; Paul Bercier, personal communication with RCTL, July 10, 2020.
- <sup>15</sup> Patricia Alice McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History, 1788–1920s: "We Like to Be Free in This Country"* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 23.
- <sup>16</sup> McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan*, 11.
- <sup>17</sup> McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan*, 45.
- <sup>18</sup> McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan*, 5.
- <sup>19</sup> McCormack, *Fort Chipewyan*, 107.
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<sup>25</sup> Alisdair Rogers, Noel Castree, and Rob Kitchin, *A Dictionary of Human Geography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868>.

<sup>26</sup> Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada, "Road Allowance People," <https://indigenoupeoplesatlasofcanada.ca/article/road-allowance-people/>.

<sup>27</sup> Hereward Longley and Tara L. Joly, *The Moccasin Flats Evictions, Métis Home, Forced Relocation, and Resilience in Fort McMurray, Alberta* (Fort McMurray Métis Local 1935, April 2018), 7.

<sup>28</sup> Longley and Joly, *The Moccasin Flats Evictions*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Longley and Joly, *The Moccasin Flats Evictions*, 59.

<sup>30</sup> Longley and Joly, *The Moccasin Flats Evictions*, 60.

<sup>31</sup> Longley and Joly, *The Moccasin Flats Evictions*, 60.

<sup>32</sup> Laura Beamish, "Council Approves Macisland Land Sale to McMurray Métis for Cultural Centre," *Fort McMurray Today*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/news/local-news/council-approves-macisland-land-sale-to-mcmurray-metis-for-cultural-centre>.

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<sup>36</sup> Johnson et al., *Lac La Biche Chronicles*, 100–101.

<sup>37</sup> Johnson et al., *Lac La Biche Chronicles*, 106.

<sup>38</sup> Lawrence Barkwell, *Fort Lac La Biche*, <https://www.scribd.com/document/115740567/Fort-Lac-La-Biche>.

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<sup>42</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Canada's Residential Schools: The Métis Experience* (Ottawa: Library and Archives Canada, 2015), [http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Volume\\_3\\_Metis\\_English\\_Web.pdf](http://www.trc.ca/assets/pdf/Volume_3_Metis_English_Web.pdf).

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<sup>44</sup> Caleb Anacker, Tanya Fontaine, Megan Tucker, Pierre Lamoureux, Goddy Nzonji, and Roy Missal, *Restoring the History of St. Paul des Métis: Understanding Métis Perspectives* (independently published, 2020).

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<sup>47</sup> The Metis Association of Alberta, Joe Sawchuk, Patricia Sawchuk, and Theresa Ferguson, "St. Paul des Metis: The First Metis Colony, 1896-1909," in *Metis Land Rights in Alberta: A Political History* (Edmonton: Metis Association of Alberta, 1981), 174.

<sup>48</sup> J. P. Brady, "The St. Paul Half-Breed Reserve," transcribed by David Morin (Gabriel Dumont Institute, October 19, 2004), 2, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/03835>.

<sup>49</sup> Brady, "The St. Paul Half-Breed Reserve."

<sup>50</sup> Brady, "The St. Paul Half-Breed Reserve."

<sup>51</sup> Anacker et al., *Restoring the History of St. Paul des Métis*, 58.

<sup>52</sup> Reconciliation St. Paul, "Our community-based project..." Facebook post, September 14, 2020. <https://www.facebook.com/reconstpaul/>



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