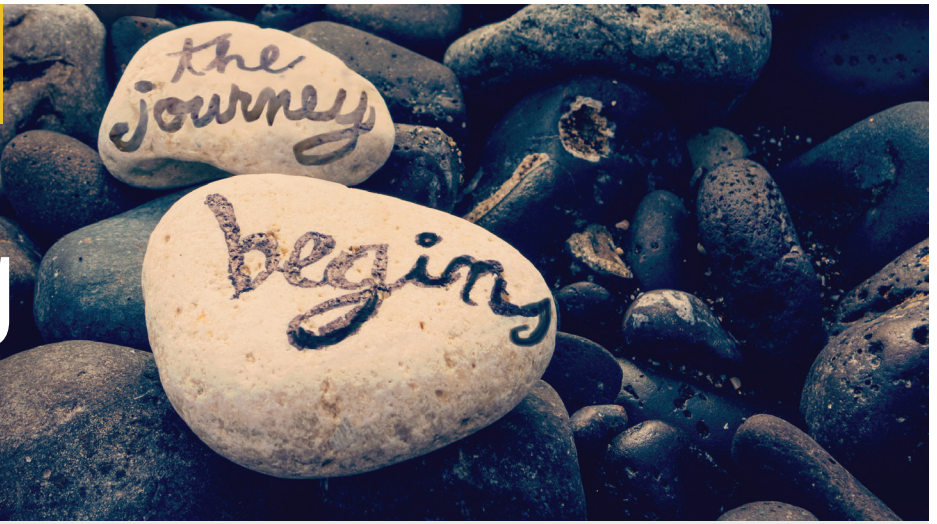


Stepping Stones



AN INTRODUCTION TO MÉTIS HISTORY

Planning your learning journey

Who are the Métis and how did there come to be Métis settlements in Alberta?



COURTESY PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF MANITOBA/N-5733

Louis David Riel, political leader of the Métis. In Alberta, Métis people commemorate his life and accomplishments on November 16th.

FIRST STEPS



The Métis are one of three distinct Aboriginal peoples of Canada recognized under the 1982 Canadian constitution. The word Métis comes from the Latin term *miscere* (to mix) and was used initially to describe the children of First Nations' women and European men.

1998 MÉTIS SETTLEMENTS

adapted from Alberta Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs

MNA (Métis Nations of Alberta) Region 1

- Kikino
- Buffalo Lake

MNA Region 2

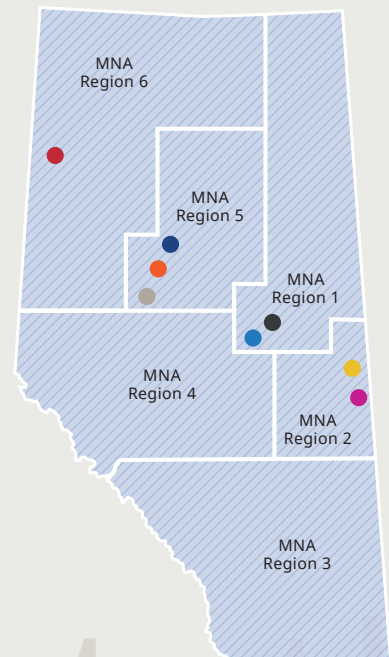
- Elizabeth
- Fishing Lake

MNA Region 5

- Gift lake
- Peavine
- East Prairie

MNA Region 6

- Paddle Prairie



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Walking Together

EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION



The Alberta Teachers' Association



The Métis played a crucial role in the development and success of the fur trade throughout the Canadian west.



USED WITH PERMISSION: MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA

The official Métis flag is blue with a white infinity symbol. It symbolizes the joining of two cultures and the existence of a people forever.



YUET CHAN

Métis celebrate their unique heritage and pass along their traditions to younger generations. The Red River Jig is a well-known dance that is performed at community gatherings and celebrations.

EARLY CANADIAN HISTORY

Historically, the Métis played a crucial role in the development and success of the fur trade throughout the Canadian west beginning as early as the 18th century. The Hudson's Bay Rupert's Land territory included a large part of present-day Nunavut, northern Ontario and Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and became known to the Métis as the "Métis Homeland." Examples of Alberta Métis communities that flourished as prominent fur trade locations include Lac La Biche Mission (c. 1785), Fort Vermilion (c. 1779) and Fort Chipewyan (c. 1778). Métis settlement in Alberta was also impacted by a loss of jobs when the fur trade declined; landlessness, which resulted from the failed Métis scrip processes in Manitoba and Saskatchewan; and deplorable living conditions, which contributed to the 1885 Métis resistance at Batoche, Saskatchewan. Louis David Riel, considered by Métis as their political leader and the founding father of Manitoba, was tried for treason by the Canadian government and executed on November 16, 1855.¹ These factors lead to the westward migration of Métis families to what is now Alberta.

ALBERTA HISTORY

Contemporary communities throughout Alberta, such as Fishing Lake, St Albert, Grouard, Gift Lake, St Paul and Carcajou can attribute their existence today to the early settlement efforts of Métis families. Prior to Alberta joining confederation, the Métis were not welcome in white settlements nor allowed to live on treaty land. During this time the Métis did not have a land base like the First Nations nor access to permanent homestead agreements like the settlers. Instead the Métis made their homes on road allowances, narrow strips of Crown land designated for future road development. These homes were often burned and the road allowance land expropriated by the Crown. This is how the Métis came to be called "the road allowance people" or "half-breeds" in the past.

In 1928, the Métis in Alberta began to organize themselves politically. L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest (later called the Métis Nation of Alberta) was formed in 1932 by Malcolm Norris, Jim Brady, Peter Tomkins, Joseph Dion and Felix Calliou. Its purpose was to lobby the government for improved social and economic conditions and a land base for the Métis. These lobbying efforts led to the Alberta government forming the Ewing Commission in 1934 to investigate the conditions of Alberta Métis. One of the recommendations of the Ewing Commission final report was for the province to set aside land for the establishment of Métis colonies. In 1938, the Alberta government passed the *Métis Population Betterment Act*, and Alberta become the first province in Canada to enact legislation specific to Métis and to designate land for Métis settlements. Initially there was land for twelve settlements. The people of each settlement formed their own elected governing councils for self-determination over the Métis land. The Alberta government, however, unilaterally closed four settlements and made changes over the years to the legislation, prompting the eight remaining settlement councils to

¹ "Louis Riel." The Canadian Encyclopedia. <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/louis-riel/> (accessed March 28, 2017).

organize in response. In 1975, the Alberta Federation of Métis Settlement Associations was legally formed and became a strong, united voice for the settlements to advance their collective interests.

In 1989, the Alberta government and the federation signed the historic *Alberta-Métis Settlements Accord* establishing a new framework for working together. The following year, Alberta passed four laws related to the Métis settlements that created a governance framework for the eight remaining settlements, protected Métis settlement lands under the provincial constitution, offered a 17-year statutory funding commitment, and provided for comanagement of subsurface resources on settlements. A total of 1.25 million acres of land was transferred to the Métis Settlements General Council, resulting in the only protected Métis land base in Canada. In 1982, the Métis were recognized in the Canadian constitution as “Aboriginal people of Canada,” along with First Nations and Inuit, giving them Aboriginal rights under the constitution.

TODAY'S MÉTIS

Statistics Canada 2011 census data reported the Alberta Métis population as 96,870, which is the largest of any province in Canada. Approximately 10 per cent of Métis live on the eight Métis settlements, with the remaining 90 per cent living throughout the province. The Métis Nation of Alberta and the Métis Settlements General Council are two provincial organizations working to advance the socio-economic and cultural well-being of the Métis people of Alberta. The Rupertsland Institute Métis Centre of Excellence, established in 2010, is a not-for-profit education, training and research institute that provides support for Métis K-12 education throughout the province. The Métis still struggle to gain their rights, as is exemplified by the Daniels Decision, April 2016, which states that Métis and non-status Indians are “Indians” under section 91(24) of the *Constitution Act, 1867*. This ruling clarifies that the federal government has primary responsibility for Métis. The impact of the Daniels Decision has yet to be confirmed.



ROYAL ENGINEERS/LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA/C-081767

Métis camp with Red River carts at Milk River Lake, Alberta 1872-1873

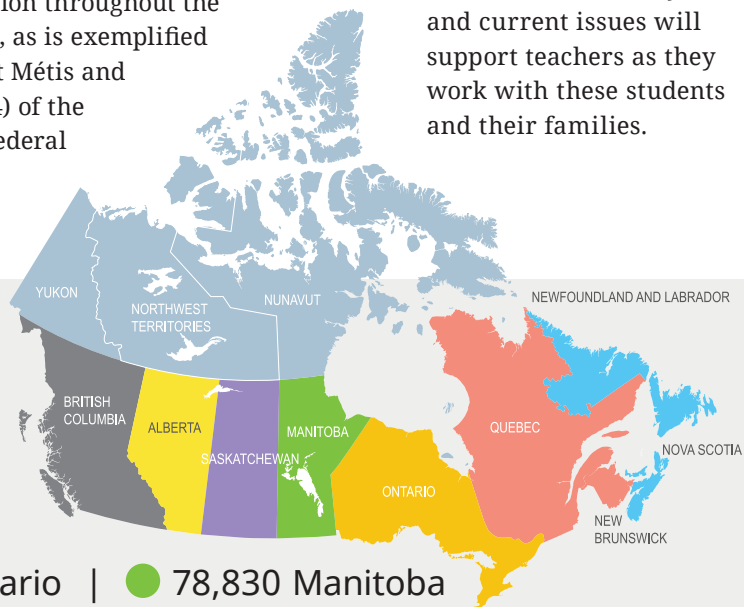
NEXT STEPS



The Métis are the largest group of self-identified Aboriginals in Canada and Alberta; therefore, it is likely the vast majority of schools in Alberta have students who self-identify as Métis. Having a knowledge of Alberta Métis history and current issues will support teachers as they work with these students and their families.

451,795

CANADA'S MÉTIS POPULATION



- 96,865 Alberta | ● 86,015 Ontario | ● 78,830 Manitoba
- 69,475 British Columbia | ● 52,450 Saskatchewan
- 41,000 Quebec | ● 23,042 Atlantic Provinces | ● 4,518 Territories

Source: Statistics Canada. 2011. National Household Survey.

Continuing Your Learning Journey

a) *What are the criteria for a person to be recognized as Métis by the Métis Nation of Alberta?*

b) *What are the Aboriginal rights afforded to the Métis under the Canadian constitution?*

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Library and Archives Canada (LAC). 2016. "Hidden in Plain Sight: Discovering the Métis Nation in the Collection of Library and Archives Canada Exhibition." LAC website. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/about-us/events/Pages/metis-nation.aspx>.

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Saskatchewan Council for Archives and Archivists (SCAA). 2016. "Our Legacy." SCAA website. www.digital.scaa.sk.ca/ourlegacy/exhibit_metisculture.



Stepping Stones is a publication of the Alberta Teachers' Association **Walking Together Project** intended to support certificated teachers on their learning journey to meet the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Foundational Knowledge competency in the Teaching Quality Standard.

Walking Together would like to acknowledge the contributions of Alberta's First Nations, Métis and Inuit community members in developing these resources.

For additional resources and information on Walking Together visit www.teachers.ab.ca.

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Walking Together

EDUCATION FOR RECONCILIATION

