

Metis Identity The Road from Trauma to Wellness



A Metis/Mitchif Cultural Understanding




Grandmothers
Indigenous
Teachings

Our ancestors benefitted from a vibrant and intensely unique culture. Among other characteristics, their clothes, their skill at buffalo hunting, their beading patterns, and the languages they spoke, gave early Métis people a deep sense of pride, and a distinct identity. However, the Métis experienced severe hardships and discrimination during the colonization of Canada and well into the twentieth century.

Generations grew up either ashamed of being Métis, or completely unaware of their cultural heritage. Some would argue that Métis still have not fully recovered from the many injustices they endured.

In 1885, Louis Riel prophesized that his people would sleep for a hundred years, but would then be reawakened by our artists, and begin to feel pride again. In many ways, his prophecy has come to pass. But our journey has not been EASY

circlesforreconciliation.ca/2017/03/04/gathering-theme-metis-identity-and-nationhood

Effects of Colonization and Reclaiming Metis/Mitchif Identity



PREVENTION - HOPE - INTERVENTION

A SAFE NON-THREATENING ENVIRONMENT

The Métis Historical Timeline:

- 1500's The Fur Trade resulted from the early contact of the European fishermen and the Indigenous people in the 16th century. The European fishermen found an abundance of cod on the shores of Newfoundland and the St. Florence River. They spent weeks on the shores of Eastern Canada to prepare and dry the fish before their trip home. The time allowed the Europeans to meet and converse with the Indigenous people. The trading was initiated because the Indigenous people had a high interest in the fisherman's metals and cloth goods and could offer the fishermen fresh meat and fur pelts for trade.
- The European fishermen found riches in the fur pelts because the "well to do" Europeans wanted the fur for jackets and hats. The wide brimmed hat came into fashion which increased the demand for the beaver fur pelts.
- 1600's The European French traders came to Canada with the hope to make riches from fur trading. They are referred to as "coureur des bois", "runner of the woods" in English translation. They explored into new areas, "the woods", to meet with the Indigenous people to trade their European items for furs. The "coureur des bois" had developed relationships with the native women to help them, specifically cooking their food, repairing their clothing, and making moccasins and snowshoes for their travel. Some of the relationships developed into families. The children of the "coureur des bois" and their native wives became the first of the Métis nation. Métis originated from a French word meaning "mixed".
- 1608 Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec and New France.
- 1620 The earliest missionary school was established near Quebec City by The Récollets, a religious order from France.
- 1627 The company of New France was formed. The King of France gave the company rights to the fur trade as long as the company brings settlers to New France.
- 1670 The Hudson Bay Company formed. The fur trader's success in the fur trade caught an English royal's attention, the cousin of King Charles II, England. "On May 2, 1670, the Royal Charter granted exclusive trading rights of the Hudson Bay watershed to "the Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson Bay." The Hudson's Bay Company developed trading forts and posts around the James and Hudson bays. Fur trappers brought in pelts to trade for resources and goods such as pots, kettles, beads, needles and blankets.

- 1700's Many male employees and former employees (free men) of the fur trade companies travelled inland for fur resources to find success because the colony had an influx of fur traders and there was an imbalance of sexes, which made it very difficult for the men to find a wife and start a life in the colony. The male employees and former male employees married native women.
- Distinct Métis communities started to form along the waterway, Great Lake's and Red River area. The Métis dressed in a combination of European and Native clothing. They had their own language, which was influenced by both of their cultures, European French and Native (usually Cree). The Métis made a living by hunting, trapping their own and selling the fur and hides to the trading posts. The Métis are known as "Buffalo Hunters" because they were excellent at hunting bison. They sold bison hides, meat and pemmican to the fur trading companies and fur traders.
- 1759 The Battle of the Plains of Abraham. General Wolfe led British troops to invade and defeat the French troops in Quebec, which ended France's claim to any land in Canada.
- 1763 The Royal Proclamation. The British Crown's constitutional framework in how to deal with "Indian tribes" and land settlement.
- The first Residential School was established near Quebec City by the Récollets.
- 1779-1821 The Northwest Company, originating from Montreal, was a fur trading business from 1779 to 1821. The Northwest Company competed against the Hudson's Bay Company. The company encouraged their fur traders, who were French and Catholic, to marry native women to increase and sustain trading with the First Nation's People.
- 1812 The War of 1812 was fought in the Great Lakes region in which sets the border between Canada and the United States.
- Thomas Douglas, the fifth Earl of Selkirk, used his money and influence to gain control of land in the Red River district to start a colonizing project for the Hudson's Bay Company. As per their agreement, he supplied the Hudson's Bay Company with 200 men each year and that they would not be part of the fur trade. His hopes were to interrupt the North West Company's trading routes and stop their business by his strategic placement of the Red River colony. The Métis were not happy with Selkirk or his control over the area because they lost their land and had long standing ties to the Northwest Company.

- 1814 The Pemmican Proclamation. On January 8, 1814, the Governor, Macdonell, on behalf of Lord Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company, issued a proclamation to forbid the export of pemmican from the territory for a year due to the food shortage within the Red River colony. The Métis were not happy with this proclamation because it affected their trading and those who made a living from it. The Métis responded by arresting the Governor and burned the settlement.
- 1816 The Battle of Seven Oaks. In this battle, Cuthbert Grant led the Métis in a battle against Lord Selkirk and the Hudson Bay Company's men because of the fur trade provisions. 21 of Lord Selkirk's men died. The Métis flag was flown for the first time as a symbol of defiance and pride for the Métis culture.
- 1821 The Hudson's Bay merged with the North West Company, creating one company and keeping the name of "The Hudson's Bay Company", which resulted in many layoffs of employees. Many former employees retired to Red River and Fort William.
- 1849-1850 The Métis and First Nations objected to the Quebec Mining Company trespassing and mining on their traditional lands at Mica Bay. The company's employees surrendered without resistance. This is known as the Mica incident which led to the Robinson treaties (Superior and Huron), between Crown and the native people.
- 1857 The Gradual Civilization Act. The legislation amended the laws to renounce the Indian status of all native men over the age of 21 that could speak, read and write English or French; and they would become British subjects.
- 1867 The Constitution Act (also known as The British North America Act) creates the Dominion of Canada, which includes Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.
- 1869-1885 The Métis lived on the lands referred to the Red River for many years with their own system of property and governance. The Canadian officials came to resurvey the lands and suggested the Métis would have to adopt different ways of property and life. Conflict developed between the Métis and the Canadian officials and led to the bloodshed in the Red River Resistance. The Métis Resistance fought for their land, freedom to govern their nation, including the guidance of education for their children.
- 1869 The sale of the Hudson's Bay Company Land to the Dominion of Canada
- 1870 The Manitoba Act, legislation that came from the Red River Resistance, passed to recognize Métis land, language and education rights.

- 1872 The Dominion Lands Act encouraged European settlers to settle in the Prairie Provinces by giving them 160 acres of secured land to build a homestead and farm. This legislation set in motion a treaty making process for all Aboriginal leaders.
- 1876 "The Indian Act is enacted and gives government exclusive right to create legislation regarding Indians and Indian lands. This act identifies who is an Indian and establishes related legal rights."
- 1879 The Davin report gives recommendation to an industrial school system where children are separated from their parents to reduce the influence of the "wigwam".
- 1880 11 Residential Industrial Schools were operating in the Dominion of Canada.
- 1884 An amendment of the Indian Act was put in to prohibit all Indian ceremonies, including the Sun Dance, Pot Latches.
- 1885 The Northwest Resistance. Métis leader, Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, Big Bear, Pound Maker and their followers fight for their land and treaty rights in Saskatchewan. Louis Riel executed a plan of governance and demands to the Canadian government. They organized themselves in a community church of Batouche. The Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald responded by dispatching Canadian military troops to Saskatchewan. A series of violent confrontations ensued between the military and the Métis and Aboriginal rebel forces, for months. There was a final engagement at Batoche in which the Métis and Aboriginal rebel forces were defeated. Louis Riel was arrested and charged with high Treason. He was found guilty and received a death penalty of hanging. Riel was hanged at Regina in November of 1885.
- As part of the children's education at the Regina Industrial school; the Aboriginal children were taken to see Louis Riel's hanging. "That day, children learned that the people who voiced support for Aboriginal rights put themselves in grave danger. The children would have to find acceptable heroes and role models from white culture." <http://wherearethechildren.ca/en/timeline/#24>
- 1889 Allegations of physical and sexual abuse emerge from the Rupert's Land School in Selkirk, Manitoba.
- 1892 The Federal government and certain churches enter into a formal agreement for the churches to operate the residential schools.
- 1896 45 Residential/Industrial schools were operating in Canada.

1900's	<p>73 Residential/Industrial schools were operating in Canada to board Métis, First Nations and Inuit children.</p> <p>It is noted that due to the insufficient funds, the schools had poor conditions in the construction of the buildings, insufficient food & clothing for the children and inadequate programming.</p> <p>The allegations of physical and sexual abuse continued to emerge.</p> <p>As well, there were numerous health crisis reports from the schools. There were outbreaks of tuberculosis at the schools which were severe, and thousands of residential school children died</p>
1914	An amendment of the Indian Act was put in for Western Aboriginals to seek official permission before appearing in any Aboriginal "costume" in any public venue.
1920	Indian Affairs made it compulsory for all Indian children, between the ages of 7 and 15, to attend residential school.
1951	An amendment of the Indian Act was put in to allow women to participate in band democracy and prohibitions on traditional Aboriginal practices and ceremonies were removed.
1958	Indian affairs recommended abolition of all residential schools.
1960's	The 60's Scoop. Many Métis children were removed from their parents due to their lack of parenting skills. The Métis children were made wards of the government's child welfare system and placed in Non-Aboriginal foster homes. Many Métis children were adopted to White families, in Canada and abroad.
1960	60 Residential Schools were in operation across Canada.
1968	Voice of Alberta Native Women's Society (VANWS) was founded. Indigenous activists, including Bertha Clark Jones, a Métis war veteran and activist, advocated for Status and Non-Status women ,who lost their status in marriage (before Bill C31). VANWS evolved into the Native Women's Association of Canada.
1969	The partnership between the churches and the government ended. The federal government takes over the Residential schools. The transfer of the schools to the Indian bands begin.
1974	The First Assembly of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) was founded by Indigenous women to preserve the Indigenous cultures within the local communities, while focusing on the inequality in status for women under the Indian Act. Bertha Clark Jones, a Metis War Veteran and Activist was the first president of NWAC.

1979	12 Residential Schools in operation across Canada.
1982	<p>The Canadian Constitution enacted the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and allows Canadians to make amendments to the Constitution without requiring approval from Britain.</p> <p>The Métis people were recognized as Aboriginal people in Canada, along with the First Nations and Inuit.</p>
1996	The last Residential School in Saskatchewan closed.
2003	The Supreme Court of Canada recognized Section 35 hunting rights in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario
2006	<p>"The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement was settled between First Nations and Inuit representatives, churches and the Government of Canada. The Agreement provided: compensation for most of the former students of residential schools, compensation for individuals who were physically or sexually abused at the residential schools, a commemoration fund and it created the mandate for the Truth and Reconciliation commission in Canada." Many of the Métis residential survivors felt excluded from these processes because their attendance was either not recorded or due to the inconsistent records kept by the school.</p> <p>http://legacyofhope.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Forgotten-booklet_web.pdf).</p>
2013	The Supreme Court of Canada declared that the federal government failed in its constitutional duty when distributing the 1.4 million acres promised to the Métis in the Manitoba Act.
2015	<p>The REDress Project , asked for donations of red dresses for a national art project to commemorate Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women. Métis Artist, Jaimie Black, initiated the project, which displayed hundreds of red dresses in public spaces, such as the Canadian Museum of Human Rights.</p>
2016	The Supreme Court of Canada declared that Métis (and non-status Indians) must be considered "Indians" in section 91(24) of the Constitution and thereby fall under federal jurisdiction. This ruling assists the Métis with possible negotiations over traditional land rights, access to education and health programs, and other government services.

Information referenced and taken from the following websites:

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<http://www.hbcheritage.ca/history/company-stories/a-brief-history-of-hbc>

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/battle-of-the-plains-of-abraham>

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<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/north-west-rebellion>

<https://www.ndstudies.gov/gr4/frontier-era-north-dakota/part-2-fur-trade-red-river/section-4-me%C3%A9tis-and-red-river-carts>

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/constitution-act-1982>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_West_Company

http://legacyofhope.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Forgotten-booklet_web.pdf

<http://wherearethechildren.ca/en/timeline/#1>

The Métis Flag



- The Métis flag is the oldest flag that originated in Canada.
- The Métis has two flags. Both flags have the same design, an infinity symbol, with two different background colors, blue or red.
- Blue was the color of the Northwest Company and red was the color of the Hudson's Bay Company.
- The infinity symbol means the joining of two cultures and the immortality of the Métis nation.

The Métis Language, Michif

- The Métis people speak Michif, a language mixed of French and Native words and grammar.
- When the French European fur traders married Native women, their children were exposed to their father's French and their mother's native language (usually Cree). It was the first generation of Métis children who started to blend parts of both languages into the new Michif language.
- The Michif language originated with the Métis people in the Ontario and Manitoba regions in the 1700's. The language spread west with the fur trade, becoming an official bartering language. There were several dialects of the Michif language. Most dialects were a combination of French and Cree, but depending on the regions of where the Métis resided, there could be a combination of French and other native language, Sioux or Ojibwa.
- Michif includes French nouns, Cree verbs, French masculine/feminine rules and Cree living/non- living rules.

The Métis Religion



A picture of Saint Joseph; by Christopher O'Donnell, O.Carm

- The Métis's spirituality was influenced by two worlds, their father's European beliefs, Catholic or Protestant, and their mother's native heritage.
- It was common for the Métis to combine their Native (mostly Cree and Ojibwa) and European heritage (Catholic or Protestant) into their beliefs and religion.
- The Métis believe in the interconnection of the land and all living things. The Métis focus on living in harmony with themselves, others and all living things in the natural world.
- The Métis spiritual culture focuses heavily on the idea of spirits. The Métis believe in keeping their spirits healthy to ensure survival, courage and physical strength. Some Métis believe in communicating with an all-knowing spirit, Kitchi-Manitou.
- From the late 1700's to 1800's Catholic missions and schools converted many of the Métis. Many Métis adopted the French Catholic customs which included prayers, the use of rosary and belief in saints. St. Joseph of Nazareth is considered the Patron Saint of the Métis people. Alongside the Catholic religion, the aboriginal customs survived which include the use of sweat lodges, medicine wheels and sacred pipes.
- Many Métis people attend the Catholic or Protestant churches and when they die, they are buried in their church's cemeteries.

The Métis Way of Life

- The Métis people became the middlemen in the fur trade, they could speak the various languages, French, Native and Michif, and could adapt to both the European and Native worlds.
- The Métis people were excellent buffalo hunters.

The Métis Food

- The Métis people lived off of the earth by hunting, fishing and gathering. They ate wild buffalo, moose, elk, deer, prairie chickens, rabbits, duck, geese and fish. They picked berries. They made pemmican, dried crushed meat mixed with fat and dried fruit, to take on hunting trips because it did not go bad. Also, they made bannock for bread.



Suzanne Patterson's paternal great grandma, Alice Emmeline [nee LINKLATER] SCHELL.

She was born May 08, 1904 Fort Pelly, Saskatchewan. She died October 15, 1973 Victoria, BC.

Recipe

Bannock

Ingredients

4 cups of flour
1/2 cup of melted lard
4 teaspoons of baking powder
pinch of salt
1 1/2 cups of cool water

Directions

1. Combine dry ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Add lard and water, and mix well.
3. Knead the dough into one or more large balls.
4. Bake on the oven rack at 400 degrees for about 30 minutes.

Recipe taken from the Alberta Métis Historical Society Website: <http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/205/301/ic/cdc/albertametis/lifestyle/food.htm>.

The Métis Sash



- The sash is a popular symbol for the Métis people.
- Métis women wear the sash over their left shoulder and Métis men wear it the traditional way, around the waist and tied on the side, with the fringes hanging down.
- Historically, the sash was worn by the Voyageurs, the French Canadians who travelled west in their canoes to inland to expand the fur trade. The sash is styled after an “Assomption sash,” named after a town in Quebec where they were mass produced. In French, a sash can be called “un ceinture fleche” which means an arrow belt in English. The arrow design can be seen in the weaving.
- The Métis used the sashes for practical uses such as carrying objects, ropes, belts, first aid, wash cloths, towels and blankets for saddles.
- The colors of the sash defined your allegiance and where you came from.
- Today, Métis individuals, groups or organizations give sashes to thank and honor individuals for their cultural, political and/or social contributions to the Métis people.

The Métis Red River Cart



- The cart originated in both French and Scottish traditions.
- The Red River cart was made of wood and tied together by leather straps. It had two large wagon wheels that made the cart very stable and allowed it to go over prairie grass, mud and marsh easily. The cart could float and get across streams. The two wood shafts attached to an axle which was strapped to an Ox or Pony.
- The Métis used the Red River Cart to carry meat from their buffalo hunt and trade goods. Also, they used the cart in farm work.
- Many Métis artisans make small wood models of the Red River Cart for display.

The Métis Music and Dance

- Music and dance played an important role in the lifestyle of the Métis people. It was up-tempo and lively.
- The fiddle is the most common instrument used by the Métis. Usually, the fiddle music was played accompanied by someone playing the spoons or toe tapping.
- Métis people learned how to make their fiddles from maple and birch wood because the fiddles were expensive to purchase.
- The Métis dancing is referred to “jigging”. The dancer usually wears moccasins and Métis regalia. Their feet move in complicated steps to the rhythm of the fiddle music.



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<https://newjourneys.ca/en/articles/the-story-of-the-metis-sash>

<http://www.louisrielinstitute.com/the-sash.php>

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World dispatch

Anne McIlroy

The Guardian Tue 23 Sep 2003 11.32 BST

Canada's forgotten people

Canadians of mixed European and native ancestry have won a major victory in their 130-year-old battle for recognition, writes Anne McIlroy

The high court ruled that the Métis have the same hunting rights as native Indians and the Inuit. That decision will likely force federal and provincial governments to negotiate with the Métis on other rights enjoyed by Canada's aboriginal people, including access to other natural resources and special government services.

The ruling was a turning point in a 130-year battle for recognition of about 300,000 Canadians of mixed European and native ancestry. It was greeted with a roar of approval by dozens of Métis people who had gathered in the stately lobby of the supreme court.

Their ancestors date back to contact between First Nations people and European explorers in the 1600s. They were the so-called "mixed-blood" children of French and English settlers, who had what were known as "country marriages" with aboriginal women. Many lived on the fringes of both native and white societies.

Their fight for justice included two armed rebellions, the Red River rebellion in 1869 and the 1885 northwest rebellion, led by Louis Riel. He was captured and hanged for treason, becoming a martyr to his cause.

Last week's ruling was especially sweet for his great grandniece, Jean Teillet, a lawyer who argued the case before the supreme court. "I feel I have brought some justice back," Ms. Teillet told reporters.

The case she argued involved Steve Powley, a Métis man who went to court after conservation officers confiscated his guns and the moose he had killed on a hunt in 1993. He argued that as a Métis man he enjoyed the same hunting rights as native Indians, who don't have to take part in an annual lottery to win permission to kill a moose.

Mr Powley grew up not knowing he was Métis. He says he didn't learn of his ancestry until 15 years ago. The judges unanimously rejected the argument that it is too difficult to identify who is a member of a Métis community. They said that a Métis community is a group of Métis, with a distinctive collective identity, who live together in the same region and enjoy a common way of life.

The Métis make up about a third of all aboriginal people in Canada, but unlike other First Nations, they don't enjoy tax-free status for money earned on reserves. They don't benefit from billions of dollars spent in federal programmes for them.

That may soon change. Ralph Goodale, the federal government minister with responsibility for the Métis, conceded last week that ruling had implications that went far beyond the right to hunt moose.

Recognition that they have equal rights to Indians and the Inuit is a cherished dream of Métis leaders, and the court could not have been more clear, arguing that they have "full status as distinctive, rights-bearing peoples whose own integral practices are entitled to constitutional protection".