

Who Are the Métis?



Welcome

Let's learn more about Métis culture and history together!

The Otipemisiwak Métis Government Children and Family Services Department is delighted to present a series of children's culture cards! We hope they will inspire you and your family to have meaningful conversations about the past, present, and future of the Métis Nation.

We would like to thank the Métis knowledge-holders who have kept Métis culture and stories alive, guiding our team as we work to preserve Métis culture and values for future generations.



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Glossary of terms



ANCESTOR

A person you came from who lived many generations ago. For example, your great-great-grandfather is your ancestor. An ancestor is the opposite of a descendant.

ANIMAL HIDE

An animal's skin prepared for use as clothing, shelter, tools, and more.

BANNOCK

A type of bread made of wheat flour. It was adapted from early Scottish fur traders by many North American Indigenous communities. Bannock is cooked over a fire, baked, or fried in oil.

BISON HUNT

Many Métis communities organized bison hunts to feed and clothe their families, fur traders, and even settler families. Métis bison hunts were one of the important ways Métis communities had self-government before Canada existed.

CREE (LANGUAGE)

A language with several dialects spoken by Indigenous peoples in what is now called Canada. The Métis language of Michif was influenced by Cree and includes Cree words.

FINGER WEAVING

Braiding or weaving wool, silk, or yarn using only the fingers.

FUR TRADE

The buying and selling of animal skins and pelts in what is now called North America in the 1500s to 1800s. Canada was built on the fur trade. Many Métis worked for one of the two major fur trade companies: Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company.

GUIDE

European traders and explorers relied on the knowledge of Indigenous guides and interpreters, especially as the Hudson's Bay and North West companies expanded into new lands. The Métis were useful guides since they knew the lands, how to survive in the wild, and often spoke both European and Indigenous languages.

INDIGENOUS

A word to refer to the original inhabitants of Canada. Canada recognizes three distinct Indigenous groups: Inuit, First Nations, and Métis.

INTERPRETER

Interpreters were necessary to bartering and communication between Indigenous and European groups during the fur trade. The Métis often knew many languages. They also understood both European and Indigenous cultures, which made them excellent interpreters.

KITCHEN PARTY

A Métis party where Métis families and friends gather together to share food, music, and dance competitions. It usually lasts for days.

PEMMICAN

A very important food for fur traders made from dried wild meat, animal fat, and dried berries. Pemmican is healthy and easy to carry, and gave fur traders the energy they needed.

SINEW

A harvested animal's tendon used for rope or thread. It is very strong and has many uses.

TRADITIONAL TERRITORY

A geographic area where Indigenous Peoples live and have historic community connections.

TUMPLINE

A strap that goes across the forehead. It is fastened to heavy items on your back to help carry them.

VICTORY OF FROG PLAIN (1816)

Known to Canadians as the Battle of Seven Oaks, this victory is important because it was the first time the Métis Nation raised the Métis flag. Under this flag, they united to defend Métis rights against colonial powers restricting the trade of pemmican.

YORK BOAT

A boat that the Métis invented for fur trading. It was bigger and sturdier than a canoe.



Who Are the Métis?



MÉTIS PEOPLE

Who are the Métis? Let's find out! The Métis are one of the three recognized **Indigenous** groups in Canada. The first Métis people were the children and grandchildren of European fur traders and First Nations women who married in the 1700s.

These families lived close to one another and had many things in common. They took parts of First Nations and European cultures and put them together to make a new way of life and a brand-new culture — the Métis. The Métis lived within the Métis Homeland and shared the same culture, language, and traditions.

Even though the word “Métis” comes from a French word meaning “mixed”, not everyone who is both European and First Nations is Métis. Being Métis today means that you are a descendant of the Métis families of the past.



MICHIF CORNER

ENGLISH
family

NORTHERN MICHIF
piyak oskân
(pe-yak os-kan)

HERITAGE MICHIF
faamii
(Fah-MEE)

FAMILY TREE FUN!

- ♦ Are you Métis? How do you know?

Scan the **QR code** for a family tree activity and see how you connect to the Métis of the past!



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What did Métis
people do in the
fur trade?

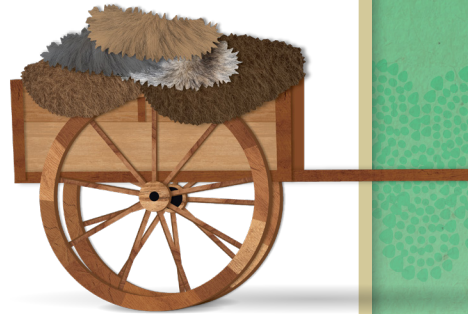


MÉTIS IN THE FUR TRADE

The Métis are sometimes called “Children of the **Fur Trade**” because the **fur trade** connected First Nations and European people, creating the first Métis families.

During the 1700s and 1800s, Métis people were important to the **fur trade**. They knew First Nations and European languages, making them great fur traders, **guides**, and **interpreters**. The Métis were also skilled hunters and trappers. Many worked for the Hudson’s Bay Company or the North West Company. They travelled for months by Red River cart or **York boat** between **fur trade** posts, transporting furs and other trade items.

Life in the **fur trade** was not easy. Fur traders had to be strong and healthy to travel through all types of weather carrying many heavy items.



MICHIF CORNER



ENGLISH
fur

NORTHERN MICHIF
ahtayak
(ah-te-yak)

HERITAGE MICHIF
li pwel daanimaal
(lee pwel daa-nee-MAAL)

FUR TRADE BRAIN TEASER!

- Why do you think Métis people made great **guides** and **interpreters**?

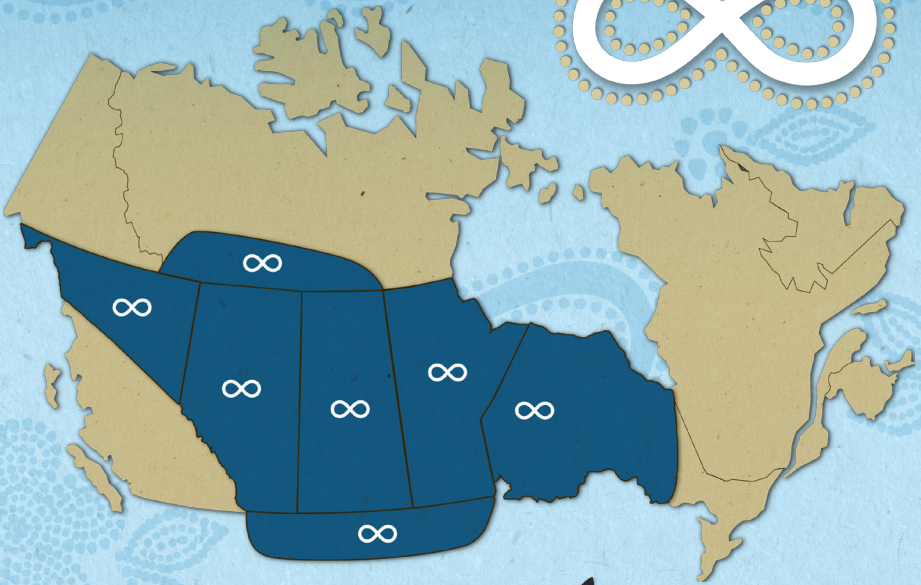
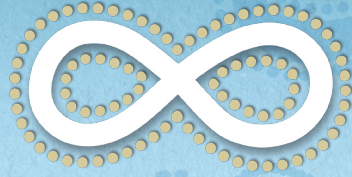
Scan this **QR code** to learn more about what Métis people traded during the **fur trade**.



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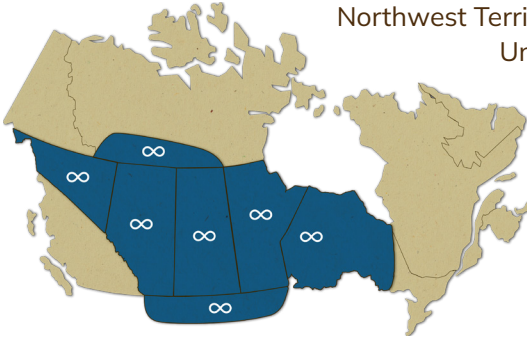
Where is the Métis Homeland?



MÉTIS HOMELAND

Look! The map shows the Métis Homeland where Métis people came from and many still live today! The Homeland is the **traditional territory** of the Métis Nation. There are many historic Métis communities, especially along rivers.

Can you find Alberta on the map? Alberta is part of the Métis Homeland. So are Saskatchewan and Manitoba, as well as parts of British Columbia, Ontario, the Northwest Territories, and the northern United States.



Métis people today came from the Métis families who lived in the Homeland many years ago.



MICHIF CORNER

ENGLISH
my home

NORTHERN MICHIF
nîᑭi
(ne-ki)

HERITAGE MICHIF
niikinaahk
(nee-kin-AAK)

FIND YOUR HOME!

- Do you live in the Métis Homeland?



Scan the **QR code** to follow a Métis fur trader's journey through the Homeland!



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What is the Métis language?



MÉTIS LANGUAGE

Did you know Métis people have their own language?

The earliest Métis families spoke a mix of Cree, Ojibwe, and French. Using parts of each, Métis people created their own brand-new language called Michif.



Métis families spoke Michif a bit differently depending on where they lived in the Homeland. Some used more French words (called “Heritage Michif”). Others used more Cree words (called “Northern Michif”). Some Métis people still speak Michif.



MICHIF CORNER

ENGLISH

Hello, how are you?

NORTHERN MICHIF

Tân'si keya?
(tan-si-kêya)

HERITAGE MICHIF

Taanishi kiiya?
(tan-SHEE kee-YA)

MICHIF TO GO!

- Download the free Northern Michif to Go app and Michif to Go app to learn more Michif words.



Scan the QR code for a fun activity that will help you learn more Michif words!



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How did Métis people travel?



MÉTIS TRANSPORTATION

During the **fur trade**, Métis people needed to move heavy animal furs across the Métis Homeland. They didn't have cars back then, so they invented the Red River cart. It was made from wood tied together with **sinew**. The carts made trails between **fur trade** posts. Some of them became the roads we still use today!

Métis people also invented **York boats** to travel on rivers and lakes. These boats were bigger, sturdier, and could carry more furs than canoes.

In the winter, Métis people used teams of dogs to pull sleds made of wood and **animal hide**. They often decorated the sled dogs with beaded or embroidered blankets called tuppies.



MICHIF CORNER



ENGLISH
traveller

NORTHERN MICHIF
opapâmacihos
(o-pa-pa-ma-chi-hos)

HERITAGE MICHIF
aen traveller
(en CHRAV-lur)

RED RIVER ROADS!

- Did you know there are roads in Alberta today that used to be Red River cart trails? Can you name one?

Scan the **QR code** for an activity about vehicles used by the Métis in the past!



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How did Métis people
live with one another?



MÉTIS COMMUNITIES

Many Métis families lived together in communities along **fur trade** routes. They often divided land near riverbanks into long, narrow strips called river lots. This way, every family had access to the river to fish and trade, as well as land to garden, harvest, and gather plants. Homes were close together so Métis families could easily visit one another because gathering is an important part of Métis culture.

Present-day Edmonton, St. Albert, Métis Crossing, and Winnipeg are a few examples of historic Métis communities that existed near rivers. On maps, you can still see the shapes of the old river lots in some of these places!



MICHIF CORNER

ENGLISH
village

NORTHERN MICHIF
ocînâs
(o-te-nas)

HERITAGE MICHIF
aen villaazh
(en vill-AAZH)



RIVER LOT LIFE!

- Why do you think river lots were good places to live?



Scan the **QR code** to learn more and design your own Métis river lot!



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What does traditional
Métis clothing
look like?



MÉTIS CLOTHING

Métis people of the past had their own style of clothing.

Métis men wore leggings, moccasins, and long hooded coats called capotes. Capotes were usually tied closed with a Métis sash. Sashes were handmade by finger weaving strands of wool or silk. They often took more than 300 hours to make! The Métis sash was very important during the fur trade, because it could be used as a towel, belt, scarf, emergency sewing kit, and **tumpline**.

Métis women usually wore long dresses, shawls, and moccasins. They often wore their hair neatly tied back.

Métis people decorated their clothing with brightly coloured glass beads and embroidered flowers.



MICHIF CORNER

ENGLISH
jacket

NORTHERN MICHIF
kapô
(ka-pot)

HERITAGE MICHIF
aen zhilay
(en ZHILL-ay)

COMPARE CLOTHES!

- How is Métis clothing of the past different from what you wear now?



Scan the **QR code** to design your very own pair of Métis moccasins!



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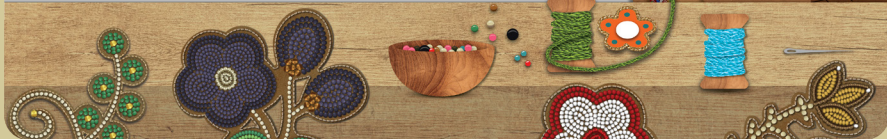
Who are the Flower Beadwork people?



MÉTIS BEADWORK

Long ago, Métis people became famous for decorating their clothing with glass beads sewed into the shapes of flowers, leaves, and other living things found in nature.

The Métis were so good at beading they even had a nickname: the Flower Beadwork People. They decorated jackets, bags, leggings, mittens, moccasins, and dog sleds with their fancy and colourful flower beadwork. Today, many Métis people bead the same designs their Métis **ancestors** did hundreds of years ago!



MICHIF CORNER

ENGLISH
bead

NORTHERN MICHIF
mîikis
(me-kis)

HERITAGE MICHIF
enn rasaad
(en ra-SAAD)

I SPY BEADWORK!

- Have you ever seen Métis-style beadwork?



Try doing what many Métis people have done for a long time. Scan the **QR code** to create your own virtual floral design!



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What does
Métis music
sound like?



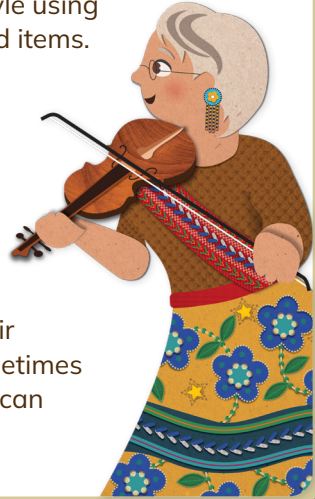
MÉTIS MUSIC AND DANCE

Do you like music and dancing? Métis people do!

When Métis people have **kitchen parties**, they want to have fun! They create their own music style using fiddles, guitars, spoons, and other household items.

Their First Nations and European **ancestors** had very different music, so they took a bit of each, mixed them up, and created something totally new! People who did not have an instrument stomped their feet or clapped their hands to the beat.

The Red River jig is the most popular Métis dance. The best jiggers move only their legs, keeping the rest of their body still. Sometimes Métis people have competitions to see who can dance the fanciest.



ENGLISH
music

MICHIF CORNER

NORTHERN MICHIF
kitohcikêwin
(kih-toh-chi-ke-win)

HERITAGE MICHIF
meuzeuk
(meh-ZEHK)

MUSIC MATTERS!

- Why do you think Métis music and dance is so important to Métis people?



Scan the **QR code** to learn about Métis music and how to do the Red River Jig!



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What are traditional
Métis foods?



MÉTIS FOODS

Before grocery stores, Métis people ate food from the land. They were expert hunters, gardeners, and fishers. They ate wild meat from bison, deer, rabbit, moose, and fish, and used many parts of the animal for clothing and tools. Almost no part of the animal was wasted. Families planted vegetable gardens, picked wild berries, gathered maple syrup, and even used wild plants as medicines!

Métis families also knew how to keep food and medicines safe for a long time so they would last through the cold winter months.

Food has always been an important part of Métis culture. Many Métis families still enjoy eating traditional Métis foods today, including **bannock**, **pemmican**, rice pudding, and raisin pies!



ENGLISH
meal

MICHIF CORNER

NORTHERN MICHIF
mîcisôwin
(me-chi-so-win)

HERITAGE MICHIF
aen ripaa
(en re-PAH)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT!

- ✦ Why do you think Métis families ate food from the land?



Scan the **QR code** for a recipe to make your own **bannock** at home!



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What is the
Métis flag?



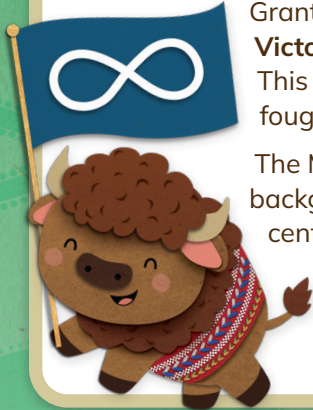
MÉTIS FLAG

The Métis flag is special to Métis people as a reminder that they are their own Nation. The Métis flag is the oldest flag in Canada's history. It is more than 150 years older than the Canadian flag. It was

flown by Métis hero Cuthbert Grant during the famous **Victory at Frog Plain in 1816.**

This was one of the first times the Métis fought in a battle as a Nation.

The Métis flag can have either a blue or red background with a white infinity symbol in the centre. This symbol looks like the number eight on its side. When Métis people fly the Métis flag, they do it with honour, showing others they are proud to be Métis!



MICHIF CORNER

ENGLISH
flag

NORTHERN MICHIF
akotâson
(a-koh-ta-son)

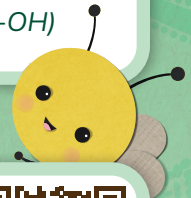
HERITAGE MICHIF
paviiyoan
(pa-vee-OH)

FLY YOUR FLAG!

- What does the infinity symbol on the Métis flag mean to you?



Scan the **QR code** for an activity where you can show the reasons you are proud to be Métis!



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Métis Government in Alberta



MÉTIS GOVERNMENT

Otipemisiwak (*Oh-teh-pim-swak*) means “the people who own themselves” in **Cree**. The Métis have always had their own government. We choose who leads us and the laws we should follow. The Métis **bison hunts** are one example of Métis government at work before Canada was a country. Today, every province in the Métis Homeland has a Métis government. The Otipemisiwak Métis Government has been the government for the Métis people in Alberta since 1928. It is the oldest modern-day Métis government.

Otipemisiwak Métis Government Citizens can vote on leaders and laws, attend cultural and community gatherings, and take part in Otipemisiwak Métis Government programs. Most importantly, becoming a Citizen shows you are proud to be part of the mighty Métis Nation!



MICHIF CORNER

ENGLISH
government

NORTHERN MICHIF
kihci okimâninahk
(*Kih-chi oh-ki-ma-
ne-nahk*)

HERITAGE MICHIF
li goovarnimaan
(*lee goo-VAR-
nee-MAA*)

KNOW YOUR ROOTS!

- ❖ To be an Otipemisiwak Métis Government Citizen, you must have **ancestors** from the historic Métis Nation. Do you have a Métis **ancestor**?

Scan the
QR code for
bison-themed
activities for
early learners!



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