

Big Idea: The Métis in Alberta have a unique story. Like First Nations, they too struggled with colonization and reclaiming of traditional lands. The Métis have proven to be resilient despite efforts to take away their power, identity, and culture.

This conversation starter is designed for use by instructional leaders and learning communities or as a self-paced study.

References

The Métis Nation of Alberta

<http://albertametis.com/culture/>

Métis Nation

<http://www.metisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-metis>

Essential Terminology

<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/Terminology%20%20%28PD-WT-16a%29.pdf>

Repressive Policies

There were many government policies that were put into action by the Canadian government that attempted to assimilate Indigenous people into Euro-settler society and strip them of their power and identity. Like First Nations people in Alberta, the Métis were also subjected to government policies. For example, one act encouraged the gradual civilization which was passed in 1857. The Gradual Civilization Act was an effort to use government policy to assimilate Indigenous peoples to the economic and social customs of European settler society.

The Gradual Civilization Act, the Métis scrip system, and other pre- and post-Confederation laws have been labelled as coercive in nature, with inherent racism and a lack of regard for the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. Such policies worked to create a dependency for Indigenous groups on colonial structures. Many have argued that stripping Indigenous people of their rights under these repressive policies represented cultural genocide.

Métis Identity in Alberta

Alberta has the largest Métis population in Canada at 96,865 or 21.4% of the total Métis population in Canada. Edmonton has more than 31,000 Métis living in the city, second only to Winnipeg. Although Alberta is home to 8 Métis settlements, approximately half of Métis people in Alberta reside in Edmonton and Calgary (Statistics Canada, 2011).



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Scrip in Alberta

The Métis did not have treaties (collectively negotiated agreements) with the Crown like First Nations people. Because Métis did not sign treaties, they also did not have reserves, or lands reserved for them. Scrip was designed to extinguish Métis title to land that was inherent through their Aboriginal ancestry. Scrip was a certificate that could be exchanged for land (land scrip) or for money to buy land (money scrip). Scrip commissioners traveled to communities in Alberta in the 1880's to the early 1900's. Métis filled out applications for their individual entitlement, were interviewed by the commissioner, proved their identity and signed an affidavit. The entitlement granted a certificate that was worth \$160 or 160 acres or \$240 or 240 acres. Adults and children were eligible. By receiving scrip a Métis person surrendered their Aboriginal title to any future land claim.



Land for Métis in Alberta

Since the scrip system extinguished individual Aboriginal title to the land, it was fundamentally different than the treaty process, which maintained the First Nations' collective rights. The Métis were not allowed to create a reserve land holding system or live in family-based block settlements. The Métis also had to compete for land on government-surveyed lands with non-Aboriginal settlers. Some Métis who had no land to live on, settled on land set aside for future roads. These people were referred to as "Road Allowance People." The lack of a land base greatly impaired the development of Métis identity.

The Mountain Métis

In 1907, the Canadian Government signed an Order In Council that set aside the Jasper Forest Reserve. Park wardens wanted to remove the mountain Métis in 1909 and 1910. The authorities seized guns and the families were forced to leave from their original homeland in the Jasper area. The descendents of these families now reside in Edson, Hinton, and Grande Cache. The families included Lewis Swift, the four Moberlys-Ewan, Adolphus, William John, as well as Isadore Findlay and Adam Joachim.



(Right): Jasper House Valley, 1872
Picture from Library and Archives Canada



(Left): Looking North from Jasper House, 1872
Picture from Library and Archives Canada

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Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA)

In the late 1920's, meetings were organized to address challenges facing the Métis in Alberta including poverty, disease, illiteracy, and the lack of a common land base. Leaders of the movement include Joe Dion, Peter Tompkins, Malcolm Norris, Jim Brady and Felix Callihoo commonly known as "The Big Five" or "Métis Famous Five". The Métis Association of Alberta was officially formed in 1932 and became the Métis Nation of Alberta in the 1990's.



"The Big Five"

*Malcolm Norris, Jim Brady, Peter Tompkins,
Joseph Dion, Felix Callihoo*

Métis Settlements

The Ewing Commission report made recommendations, which resulted in the *Métis Betterment Act of 1938*. Through the efforts of the Ewing Commission and the Métis Nation of Alberta, twelve Métis settlements were established under the Act. In the late 1950s, four of the settlements (Touchwood, Marlboro, Cold Lake, and Wolf Lake) were closed. Alberta is the only jurisdiction in Canada that has provided the Métis with a self-governing land base.

Métis Settlements	Population	Area (Hectares)
Buffalo Lake	712	33697
East Prairie	446	33444
Elizabeth	653	25244
Fishing Lake	658	35551
Gift Lake	734	81273
Kikino	544	44357
Paddle Prairie	607	173882
Peavine	304	81638
TOTAL	4858	509086

Statistics Canada 2016

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Métis Settlements

There are currently 8 Métis settlements in Alberta. In all, Métis settlements are home to the minority of Alberta Métis. Approximately 4800 members live on the 8 Métis Settlements, which cover a land base of 1.25 million acres. These communities have played an important role in Alberta's history, society and economy. Students who live on settlements go to schools that are under the Alberta Education Act, just like students who live in other municipalities. The Northland School Division oversees and controls education on six of the Métis settlements. Buffalo Lake and Kikino are serviced by Northern Lights School Division. Schools on settlement are provincially funded schools which is much different than the federally funded reserve schools, which are controlled by their education authorities.

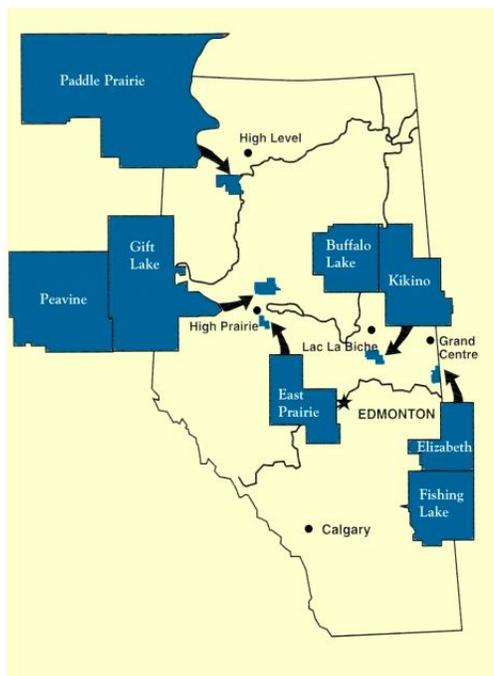
Settlement Membership

Métis Settlements Act stipulates that a Métis settlement member must be of Indigenous ancestry, identify with Métis history and culture, be at least 18 years of age who has lived in Alberta for the previous 5 years and has been approved for membership by the Settlement Council. A settlement member must live on the settlement (or have an approved leave of absence) and must not be in debt to the settlement.

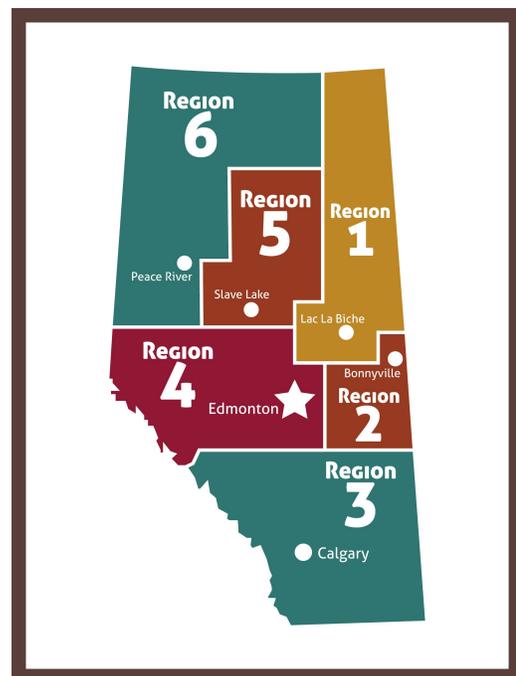
Settlement Governance

A five person elected council, which has statutory authority similar to municipal governments, governs each Métis settlement. The Metis Settlements General Council (MSGC) has 44 members including all of the settlement council members and four elected Executive members.

The map on the left illustrates where each settlement is located in Alberta. The map on the right illustrates the six Métis regions in Alberta. Operating in each region is a Métis local. Each local has an elected president and vice president and elected individuals who bring local issues to Provincial council.



www.metisarchitect.com



www.abertametis.com

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Métis and the Law

The Daniels decision (Daniels vs. Canada, April, 2016) is likely one of the most misunderstood decisions ever released by the Supreme Court of Canada. As a result of the Daniels decision the Supreme Court was asked to make three declarations. These declarations are:

- that the Métis and non-status Indians are 'Indians' under the Constitution;
- the federal government owes a fiduciary duty to Métis and non-status Indians; and
- the Métis and non-status Indians have a right to be consulted and negotiated with in good faith.

The result of the Daniels decision meant that the Métis and non-status Indians can look to the federal government to negotiate improved programs and services. Unfortunately, the federal government has no obligation to do anything.

The Powley case outlined a set of criteria known today as the "Powley test" which determines whether a Métis person can exercise their hunting rights in given situations. Although *Powley* was a hunting case, legal experts believe it has the potential to expand into larger conversations about rights — for example, the Métis right to self-government and self-determination. It is also significant in that it finally establishes who can legally qualify for Métis rights. Although the Powley test can be problematic, like any sort of identity criteria, it has shaped recent discourse on Métis issues and has expanded popular thought about Métis from being limited to Red River Métis to understanding that Métis communities exist elsewhere.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Question: After reading this Conversation Guide, what resonated with you? Perhaps it was something that surprised you, or something you were unaware of? Perhaps it was something that you agree or disagree with? Take turns sharing your thoughts and building on each others' ideas.

Métis Youth in Education

As you have read earlier, in total, approximately half of Métis in Alberta reside in larger urban centres.

Question: Taking these statistics into consideration, what does this mean for Indigenous education and educators in cities? How can we foster a healthy Métis identity in students in schools?

Defining Métis Identity

In 2002, the Métis National Council adopted a national definition of "Métis." The definition was brought to the Métis Nation of Alberta General Assembly in 2003, accepted, passed, and incorporated into the MNA bylaws under Article 3.1. According to the Métis Nation Council, a Métis is defined as 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.

Question: How is this definition different from what you originally may have perceived it to be? How might the process of becoming "accepted" create issues of identity in Métis individuals?

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For More Information

Musée Heritage Museum (St. Albert)

<http://museeheritage.ca/>

Gabriel Dumont Institute Virtual Museum

<http://www.metismuseum.ca/>

The Métis Nation of Alberta

<http://albertametis.com/culture/>

The Canadian Encyclopedia

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/browse/people/aboriginal-peoples-4/#Métis/>

Métis Nation

<http://www.metisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-metis>

Learn Michif

<http://www.learnmichif.com/>

Kikino: Our History

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLo7V7va5RE>

Métis Cards in Alberta: Registry & Genealogy

<http://albertametis.com/registry/>

Rupertsland Institute for Métis Excellence

www.rupertsland.org

The Mountain Métis

<http://traditionalresearch.com/>

The Forgotten Métis

<http://forgottenmetis.ca/en>

Walking Together: First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum

<http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aswt/>

Our Words, Our Ways: Teaching First Nations, Métis and Inuit Learners

<https://education.alberta.ca/media/563982/our-words-our-ways.pdf>

Our Way is a Valid Way

http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/pdf/13-14/our_way_resource.pdf

ATA Stepping Stone on Metis

<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Human-Rights-Issues/Metis%20%28PD-WT-16b%29.pdf>

Education is Our Buffalo

[https://www.teachers.ab.ca/sitecollectiondocuments/ata/publications/human-rights-issues/education%20is%20our%20buffalo%20\(pd-80-7\).pdf](https://www.teachers.ab.ca/sitecollectiondocuments/ata/publications/human-rights-issues/education%20is%20our%20buffalo%20(pd-80-7).pdf)

The Daniels Decision

<https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/15858/index.do>

The Powley Case

http://indigenousfoundations.adm.arts.ubc.ca/powley_case/

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