

Canada agreed and the Manitoba Act established Manitoba as a province with guarantees for the Métis built in. Furthermore, 1.4 million acres were set aside for the Métis. When violence and the encroachment of the new Ontario settlers on Métis lands occurred after 1870, the Métis resisted. However, Orangemen out to avenge the death of Thomas Scott, land speculators, the illegal actions of Canadians, especially the Canadian land office employees and a reign of terror carried out by the Canadian militia sent out in 1870, resulted in most Métis leaving their homeland by 1880.

By 1885, Canadian duplicity towards the Métis resulted in some of them asking Louis Riel to return to Canada to help them out. Canada's answer was 6,000 troops which defeated the small number of Métis at Batoche in Saskatchewan in 1885. For his part, Louis Riel was charged with high treason and found guilty by six English-speaking Protestant jurors. Stipendiary magistrate Huger Richardson then sentenced him to hang. After all appeals failed, Riel was hanged on November 16, 1885 in Regina Saskatchewan.

To the Métis, 1870 was the Confederation of Manitoba and 1885 the final attempt to get Canada to keep the promises it had made in the Manitoba Act. These were not "rebellions" as far as they were concerned. The Métis sense of grievance stems from these two events and the death of Riel. Their memories of their lost land base and relegation to the sidelines of Canadian society, a period of time often referred to as "The Forgotten Years," festered in their national soul before they re-appeared on the Canadian scene in the late 1960's ready to assume their rightful place in the Canadian nation.



The National Flag of the Métis

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Aboriginal Student Centre

Racism

**Get
the
Facts!**

The Métis



A multi series pamphlet designed to educate on racism and address some of the stereotypes of Aboriginal Peoples.





Welcome to the second in the series of the Aboriginal Student Centre's pamphlets designed to eliminate racism! Unfortunately, racism still exists in our country and has taken a more subtle form. Studies show that many people, if the situation presented itself and they could get away with it, would still discriminate on the basis of race. This pamphlet is designed to rout out the last strongholds of racism and address the stereotypes that Aboriginal people face daily.

"Who are the Métis"?

There is an old joke that talks about the Métis appearing nine months after the first white man came to Turtle Island. In reality, this is not a joke but an assumption that having parents who are European and Aboriginal makes one a Métis. This idea is a racist as the terms "half-breed" or "mixed-blood." The assumption that blood makes the person or that it defines someone is racist, pure and simple.

The Métis first emerged in the east (Quebec, eastern Ontario and the Great Lakes Region) but were only recognized as a distinct nation later in the Red River area. During the early Fur Trade era, European men and First Nation women raised their families in small communities that served as depots for the fur trade. These communities were culturally isolated for most of the year from both the French and the Aboriginal peoples. It was in such places that the first vestiges of the Métis Culture were created.

The Métis established their nation in the area around the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers during the fur trade wars in the 1700's and early 1800's. Involved in the fur trade as traders, employees, scouts and hunters, many Métis became independent businessmen supplying food and services to the fur trade. By 1870, when Canada wished to assume

sovereignty over Rupert's land, the Métis were ready to take an active part in Canadian expansion in the west. However, Canadian racism prevented the Métis Nation from actively participating in the development of the west and, as a result, the Métis became marginalized and poor.

Some of North America's greatest cities began as Métis settlements. Cities along the Great Lakes regions like Chicago, Thunder Bay, and Sault Ste. Marie are good examples of this process. Smaller places like St. Lazarre, St. Eustache, St. Ambrose and Ste. Madeleine are similar examples in Manitoba.

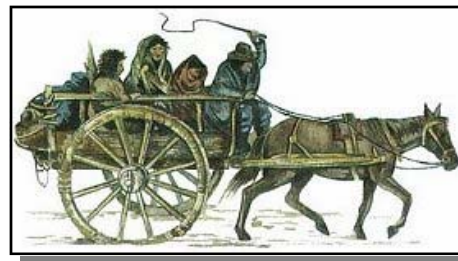
Are the Métis just a mix of European and First Nations or, are they Cree and French? - Or, are they a separate cultural entity altogether?

Métis identity is a highly controversial and debated subject among academics, the Métis and governments. At a recent National Assembly of the Métis National Council in Edmonton, a national definition was adopted unanimously by Métis leaders from across the homeland after years of consultation and discussion. The definition reads as follows:

"Métis means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation as Métis"

During the reserve treaty phase of Canada's development (1870-1900), treaty commissioner Dewdney identified three types of Métis: the English Métis, "the easiest to assimilate"; the French Métis, not as easy to assimilate; and the Bois Brûlé (Half Burnt Woodmen) the hardest to assimilate.

In essence, the English Métis were assumed to be those people who were acculturated into British society from the marriages of Hudson's Bay Company men who married Aboriginal women *à la façon du pays* (according to the



custom of the country - common-law). Usually, their children were educated in Montreal. However, their family life remained strictly British.

The French Métis were the ones who created the Métis Nation as described above. Their children were either educated locally at what would become St. Boniface College, in Quebec, or they were left uneducated. The Bois Brûlé were Métis who were the "unskilled labor" of the Métis world and who were usually called by this term in the early 1800's. By 1870 the term had mostly ceased to be used. Since World War Two another group of people have started calling themselves Métis. These are Aboriginal people who live outside the Red River and Rupert's Land Métis homeland. In fact, most of these people are actually *Non-status Indians* who are unable to get the Canadian government to accept them as Treaty Indians for one reason or another. In order to obtain even minimal help as Aboriginal people, they have come to depend on the historical racist identification of the Métis as "*half-breeds*". In other words, if even part of your ancestry is Aboriginal, you are a "*mixed-blood*" or "*half-breed*" or as the term is now known, "Métis." Needless to say this has caused great consternation in the Métis world.

What were the Riel Rebellions?

By 1870, the Métis had established their nation in and around the Red River Settlement (later to be known as Winnipeg). During the time that Canada was establishing Confederation in the West, there were about 10,000 Métis in the Settlement. Unfortunately for the Métis, when the Dominion of Canada purchased Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company, they did not consider the Métis as civilized enough to take part in the economic and political life of Manitoba.

The Métis petitioned Ottawa to recognize their rights and to ensure that their land base, economic base and culture would be protected.

