

## A Youth's Perspective

# Métis Fact Sheet

### Who We Are...

The Métis people were born from the marriages of Cree, Ojibwa and Salteaux woman, and the French and Scottish fur traders, beginning in the mid-1600s. The Métis Homeland encompasses parts of present-day Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Métis culture was a combination of French, English and Indian influences.

The Métis played an instrumental role in the shaping of Canada, and work tirelessly to share their culture, music, traditions and knowledge of the environment with their fellow Canadians. Today, the Métis live, work, raise their families and pay taxes in communities all across Canada.

### National Definition of Métis

1.1 "Métis" means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of Historic Métis Nation ancestry, and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

Defined Terms in National Definition of Métis

1.2 "Historic Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people then known as Métis or Half-breeds who resided in the Historic Métis Nation Homeland

1.3 "Historic Métis Nation Homeland"

means the area of land in west central North America used and occupied as the traditional territory of the Métis or Half-breeds as they were then known.

1.4 "Métis Nation" means the Aboriginal people descended from the Historic Métis Nation which is now comprised of all Métis Nation citizens and is one of the "aboriginal peoples of Canada" within the meaning of s.35 of the Constitution Act 1982.

1.5 "Distinct from other Aboriginal peoples" means distinct for cultural and nationhood purposes.

### Our Flag...



The blue background represents the alliance with the North West Company, whose main colour was blue. The horizontal eight is an infinity sign that has two meanings; the joining of two cultures and existence of a people forever. The Infinity symbol has also emerged in the traditional dances of the Métis. The quadrille is a traditional dance where the dancers move in a figure eight pattern. The red flag is the Métis Hunting Flag.

Developed by Youth Facilitator Joni Labbe and Metis youth of Historic Sault Ste. Marie  
Funded by the Government of Ontario, Ontario Women's Directorate



Minwaashin Lodge Ottawa Ontario Youth as Leaders Project

### Our Sash



The sash was not only functional, but colourful and identifiable as Métis apparel. The sash originally served as a key holder, first aid kit, wash-cloth, towel, and as an emergency bridle and saddle blanket. Its fringed ends could become a sewing kit when the Métis were on a buffalo hunt.

**BLUE AND WHITE:** represent the colours of the national flag. This flag a white infinity symbol on a blue background.

**RED:** The Métis hunting flag has a red background and a white infinity symbol.

**BLACK:** added to the new sash, represents the dark period after 1870 when the Métis were had their land taken by Canada and were asked to leave in the years that followed. Métis were beaten or shot on the streets of Winnipeg, and bounties were placed on those who had collaborated with Louis Riel.

**GREEN:** signifies fertility, growth and prosperity for the Métis Nation.

### MICHIF - THE LANGUAGE

Michif is a rather irregular language. It is half Cree and half French. It is a mixed language, drawing its nouns from a European language and its verbs from Cree language.



### LOUIS RIEL

On November 16th each year, the Métis Nation hosts commemorative ceremonies at locations throughout Ontario and western Canada to honour Riel's contributions to Canada and to his people. Louis Riel was proud of his heritage and fought for justice for his people. It has been more than a hundred years since Riel's death, yet he is still one of Canada's most famous Aboriginal persons and a hero in the hearts of many Métis. Louis Riel fought with words, prayers and total conviction in the cause of the "Half-Breed" people and for the rights of all Western Canadians.

### Statistics

- Individuals who self identify as being Métis has risen to 73 605 in Ontario.
- 33% of the overall Aboriginal population in Canada are Métis.



### Jigging - Our Dance

The Red River Jig is a unique dance created by the Métis people. It combines the complicated footwork of Native dancing with the instruments and form of European music. Often the Métis made their own fiddles because they could seldom afford the steep price of European imports. Traditionally, dancing started early in the evening and could last until dawn. Métis people still enjoy jigging; local, provincial and national dance teams attend conferences, exhibitions and powwows.

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