



Artwork by George Gingras

R is for Red River Cart

Red River carts were used by the Métis on buffalo hunts and for freighting. Made entirely from wood, they were very loud and could be heard over many kilometres.

R si poor shaarett

Lii Michif kii apachihaywuk lii shaarett lii bufloo ka noochihachik pi ka awaachikaychik. Aan bwaa kii ooshiikashoowuk, kii shoohkitakooshiwuk waahyow ooshi kii paytawawuk.



R is for Red River Cart

Red River Carts were used by the Métis on buffalo hunts and for freighting. Made entirely from wood, they were very loud and could be heard over many kilometres.

R si poor shaarett

Lii Michif kii apachihaywuk lii shaarett lii bufloo ka noochihachik pi ka awaachikaychik. Aan bwaa kii ooshiikashoowuk, kii shoohkitakooshiwuk waahyow ooshi kii paytawawuk.

The **Red River** Cart was the Métis' main source of inland transportation. **Michif** words for Red River Carts include "aen wagon" and "aen shaarett." From the 1820s until the 1880s, thousands of Red River Carts travelled along trails throughout the North American Great Plains. Often, many carts would be tied together to form trains, or long lines of carts. These cart trails linked settlements together and opened up Western Canada to commerce before the coming of the railway. Pulled by oxen, Red River Carts could carry hundreds of kilograms of cargo and could travel up to 80 kilometres in a day.

Red River Carts were made entirely of wood, which made them easy to repair. If a cart broke down, any local wood from trees such as poplar, elm, willow, or Manitoba oak could be used to make quick repairs. While trees are not plentiful in some parts of the Prairies, they can be found in **coulees** and along river and creek banks. Wood was also used for another reason. If a cart came to a river, the wheels could be removed and attached to the underside of the cart. The cart would then float across the water like a raft. Being made of wood, the Red River Carts were noisy when moving. The wheels could not be greased because the grease would mix with dust and would harden. The wooden wheels would sometimes become very rigid, which made any movement impossible. **First Nations** groups called the Métis "the half-wagon men" because they were always seen travelling in Red River Carts!

Other Resources:

Barkwell, Lawrence J., L. Dorion, and A. Hourie. *Metis Legacy II: Michif Culture, Heritage, and Folkways*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2007.

Pelletier, Joanne. *Métis Historical Booklet Series: The Buffalo Hunt*. Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1985. (Available online at www.metismuseum.ca).

Racette, Sherry Farrell. *The Flower Beadwork People*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2009.

The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture (www.metismuseum.ca).

