

Political Chronology of the Métis Nation—Saskatchewan

The Métis Nation has a long history of political activism and engagement which predates the Canadian Confederation by more than 50 years. This chronology focuses on Métis living in present-day Saskatchewan with some references to the Métis Nation of Western Canada.

1774: Cumberland House was founded as a fur trade depot. It is the oldest settled community in Saskatchewan.

1778: Ile-à-la Crosse was founded. It is the second oldest community in Saskatchewan.

1770s-90s: Métis moved into what is now Western Canada from the Great Lakes region. These Métis intermarried with Métis indigenous to the region. Métis group identity began to form in what is now Red River (southern Manitoba).

1793: Cuthbert Grant was born at Fort Tremblante (near Yorkton).

1810s: The Métis (Infinity/Circle of Eight) flag flew for the first time in what is now Manitoba. The Métis flag is the oldest patriotic flag created in Canada.

1811: The Red River Settlement was founded.

1815: The Métis signed a treaty with the Hudson's Bay Company in order to conclude an undeclared war between Company officials, Selkirk Settlers and the Métis and their North West Company allies.

1816: (June 19). The Métis and their North West Company allies, led by Cuthbert Grant, defeated Hudson's Bay Company officials and Selkirk Settlers at the Battle of Seven Oaks. The battle lasted only 15 minutes and involved fewer than 80 men.

1816: Pierre Falcon composed "The Battle of Flag Plain" or "*la gournouillère*" / "*la grenouillère*")—the first Métis national anthem and the oldest patriotic song created in Canada.

1820s-'50s: Métis self-identity further crystallized as hundreds of Red River Métis and Scots/Orkney Half-Breeds began working as free traders, bison hunters and farmers. During this time, the Métis called themselves "*gens de libre*," "*Otipemisiwak*" or the "Free People" because of their desire to be free. They were also known as "*Apeetogosan*," "*Wissakodewinimi*," "*chicot*" and "*bois-brûlés*" because of their mixed heritage.

1830: The Métis demanded representation on the Hudson's Bay Company governing body for the Red River Settlement, the Council of Assiniboia.

1835: the Métis protested against the Hudson's Bay Company trade monopoly, and requested free trade with the United States.

1837: Gabriel Dumont was born in St. Boniface.

1839: The HBC belatedly appointed Métis leader Cuthbert Grant to the Council of Assiniboia, which recognized that the Métis had a right in governing the Red River Settlement.

1840: The Red River Métis codified *the Law of the Hunt*, to govern and regulate the biannual bison hunts.

1844: Louis Riel was born in St. Boniface.

1845: The Métis petitioned the Governor of the Council of Assiniboia to recognize the Métis' land tenure. The Métis also asked for free trade with the United States. At this time, British troops were sent to Red River Settlement because of the official fear of a possible Métis uprising.

1849: A HBC magistrate released Métis trader Guillaume Sayer, after convicting him of trafficking in furs, because of the presence of many armed Métis horsemen outside of the courthouse.

1851: The Métis won a decisive two-day battle against the Dakota at Grand Coteau, just outside of present-day Bismarck, North Dakota, on July 13 and 14.

1851: The Métis and the Dakota concluded a peace treaty that ensured that the two nations shared bison stocks.

1854: Cuthbert Grant died.

1857: The English-Métis lawyer Alexander Isbister, while resident in London, lobbied the Imperial Parliament to recognize the Métis' Aboriginal rights. It was decided that, following the precedent of *The Royal Proclamation* (1763), once Rupert's Land became part of a larger British North-American union, the region's Aboriginal residents should have a formal Treaty process with the Crown before Euro-Canadian/European settlement could occur.

1864: (January 21). Louis Riel Sr. died.

1869: The HBC sold Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada for £300, 000 and 1/20 of the territory's fertile land without consulting its Indigenous residents.

1869: (October 11). Édouard Marion discovered government surveyors on his land and summoned neighbours and Louis Riel to stop them. The Métis challenged this survey that was conducted without their consent.

1869: (Oct.16). Red River Métis formed the National Métis Committee and called for an independent Métis republic. They elected John Bruce as president and Louis Riel as secretary.

1869: (November 2). 500 Métis seized Fort Garry, where the Council of Assiniboia met and where the Hudson's Bay Company had its main administrative offices in the region. The Métis gained food, armaments and a defensive position from which to defend their cause.

1869: (December 8). The Métis formed a Provisional Government and created a newspaper entitled *La Nouvelle Nation/The New Nation*. The Métis wanted to negotiate to join Canada as a nation through an international treaty.

1870: (January 26—February 11). In order to determine the region's political future, the Convention of Forty was held with twenty English Métis and twenty French Métis delegates. They drafted the second *List of Rights*, which formed the basis of *The Manitoba Act*.

1870: (May 12). *The Manitoba Act* recognized Métis land rights and contained provisions for denominational or religious schools. Through the implementation of *The Manitoba Act*, the Dominion of Canada tacitly recognized the Métis as a nation. For the Métis, the act's most important provisions included bilingual denominational schools, judicial and parliamentary systems (Section 22) and measures to extinguish their "Indian" title to the land, through the granting of 1.4 million acres of land to "the children of half-breed heads of families" (Sections 31-32).

1870: (July 15). Manitoba became Canada's fifth province, without recognizing Louis Riel and the Métis as its founders.

1870: (August). More than 1,000 Canadian troops arrived in Manitoba and begin a reign of terror against the Métis. Many Manitoba Métis moved to present-day Saskatchewan to escape racism.

1870s: Many permanent Métis settlements in what is now present-day Saskatchewan are founded including Batoche and its environs and Willow Bunch. The Métis also took part in the numbered Treaty Process as interpreters.

1870-1902: Métis Scrip Commissions travelled throughout Western Canada and handed out Métis Scrip to applicants.

1872: *The Dominion Lands Act* became law. The act provided free homesteads to those who applied to settle on farm and ranch land in Western Canada—provided they settled the land, farmed on it and made improvements to their property. The original *Dominion Lands Act* did not address the issue of the Métis' Aboriginal rights.

1872: The Saskatchewan valley Métis petitioned for an inalienable Métis colony of 1,800, 000 acres.

1873: (May 3). John Fisher and ten other Métis sent a petition to A.M. Burgess, Deputy Minister of the Interior.

1873: (September 11). The Métis of the Qu'Appelle Valley sent a petition to Lieutenant-General Alexander Morris with thirty-one signatures.

1875: *The Northwest Territories Act* became law. There are no provisions for the Métis in this act which affected Métis living in what are now Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan and northern Manitoba.

1875: (February). The Canadian government granted an amnesty to all Métis (except Louis Riel) who participated in the 1869-70 Red River Resistance.

1875: (August). The North-West Mounted Police forced the Batoche-area Métis to abandon their form of local self-government, "*le conseil de Saint-Laurent*" or the "Council of St. Laurent." With Gabriel Dumont as its president, the council's last edict tried to enforce *The Law of the Prairie's* conservation measures.

1877: (September 19). The Métis of the Blackfoot Crossing sent petitions to Lieutenant-Governor David Laird containing forty-three signatures.

1878: (February 1). The Métis at St. Laurent (Batoche) prepared a list of grievances. In a letter to the Lieutenant-Governor David Laird, Gabriel Dumont asked for local schools to be subsidized by the territorial government, assistance for Métis farmers, and the appointment of a French-speaking magistrate, a Métis member of the territorial governing council, and a land grant to extinguish the Métis' Aboriginal title.

1878: Prince Albert Métis and non-Aboriginal settlers sent a petition to the Governor General regarding their land rights with one hundred and forty-eight signatures.

1878: (January 15). Prince Albert Métis and non-Aboriginal settlers sent a petition, with eighty signatures, to the Minister of the Interior.

1878: (February 1). Gabriel Dumont and the St. Laurent Métis sent a petition to Lieutenant-Governor David Laird.

1878: (August 1). Cypress Hills Métis sent a two hundred and seventy-six signature petition to the Northwest Council.

1879: Amendments to *The Dominion Lands Act* acknowledged that the Métis had outstanding claims to their lands in the North-West Territories. Section 42 indicated that the federal government had a responsibility to protect Aboriginal rights (for both Métis and First Nations), and thus had a duty to limit non-Aboriginal settlement in a region until the local First Nations and Métis inhabitants had their Aboriginal title extinguished through Treaty and Scrip. Section 125 of the act granted occupancy to those who lived peaceably and continually on a piece of land. However, the act, even with these amendments, did not guarantee the Métis title to their lands. Therefore, Métis living in what is now Saskatchewan sent dozens of petitions asking that their occupancy and title to their lands be recognized.

1880: The Métis sent a petition to John A. Macdonald, Minister of the Interior, with sixteen signatures. Additionally, the Métis of Prince Albert and Edmonton sent petitions to Macdonald with one hundred and two signatures.

1881: The Métis of Qu'Appelle Valley sent a petition to the Marquis of Lorne, the Governor General, with one hundred and eighteen signatures.

1881: (March 4). The Métis residents of Battleford sent a petition with seventy-three signatures to John A. Macdonald, the Minister of the Interior.

1881: (October 18). The residents of Prince Albert petitioned Macdonald with twenty-five signatures.

1882: (August). The Métis of Qu'Appelle Valley petitioned Edgar Dewdney, the Lieutenant Governor, with forty-four signatures.

1882: (September 4). The Métis of Prince Albert and St. Antoine de Padoue, now Batoche, sent a petition with forty-four signatures to John A. Macdonald.

1883: (November 19). The St. Louis Métis petitioned George Duck, the land agent in Prince Albert, with thirty-two signatures.

1884: (May 6) The Northwest's English and French Métis passed a resolution to get Louis Riel's assistance in order to negotiate with Canada for formal title to their lands.

1884: (June 4). James Isbister, Gabriel Dumont, Moïse Ouellette and Michel Dumas arrived at St. Peter's Mission in Montana in order to bring back Louis Riel to Canada.

1884: (Summer). Louis Riel held meetings with English and French-speaking Métis and non-Aboriginal settlers in order to negotiate provincial status for the region.

1884: (December). Louis Riel and Henry Jackson drafted a petition listing the grievances of the Northwest's inhabitants. The government responded by appointing a committee to investigate Métis claims and to make a list of those who did not take Scrip in Manitoba.

1885: (March 8). Louis Riel put forth a motion for the formation of a Provisional Government and the drafting of a *Bill of Rights*.

1885: (March 19). Louis Riel was informed that the Métis petitions would be met with bullets. Thus, the Métis immediately formed a Provisional Government. Pierre Parenteau was chosen as president, Charles Nolin was commissioner, Gabriel Dumont was general, French-Canadian Philippe Garnot was secretary, and twelve other Métis men were elected as members of the council. The non-Aboriginal settlers and English Métis withdraw their support of the Provisional Government. The Provisional Government or Exovodate established its headquarters at the Batoche Church.

1885: (March 26). The first battle of the 1885 Resistance occurred at Duck Lake. The Métis, under the leadership of Gabriel Dumont, defeated a party of North-West Mounted Police officers and settler volunteers.

1885: (April 24). Métis forces, under Gabriel Dumont, clashed with General Middleton's army at Fish Creek (Toround's Coulee). The Battle of Fish Creek was a Métis victory.

1885: (May 9-12). The Métis and their allies fought the Canadian Army at Batoche. On May 12, tired and out of ammunition, the Métis valiantly succumbed to a hasty charge by the Canadian Army. Many Métis homes were pillaged and burned, and many Métis women and children hid along the riverbank to avoid capture. Gabriel Dumont escaped to the United States. Louis Riel surrendered three days after the battle.

1885: (November 16). Louis Riel was executed in Regina.

1885-1945: The Road Allowance Period of Métis history began. The Métis were largely socially, economically and politically marginalized by the larger society.

1887: (July 17). The Union Nationale Métisse Saint-Joseph was founded in St. Boniface, Manitoba.

1897: The St. Albert Métis Association or the Alberta Half-Breed Association was founded in St. Albert, Alberta.

1899: Treaty 8's Half-Breed Commission travelled through what is now Alberta, Saskatchewan and the North-West Territories and issued Scrip to Métis applicants.

1900: (May 25). Malcolm Norris was born in present-day Alberta.

1902: The federal government established Métis townships in what is now Green Lake, Saskatchewan.

1908: (March 11). James Brady was born in Lac St. Vincent, Alberta.

1930: *The Natural Resources Transfer Agreement* returned control of natural resources to the three Prairie Provinces. The Métis are impacted by paragraph 12 which argued that the Indians have the right to harvest food on unused Crown land.

1932: (December 28). L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord-Ouest was founded in St. Albert, Alberta. Joseph F. Dion served as its first president.

1935: The *Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act* became legislation. The act created common community pastures, which eventually led to the forced removal of many Métis living along unused Crown land.

1938: The Saskatchewan Métis Association was founded for Métis living in the province's north. The Saskatchewan Métis Society was also founded about this time. It represented Métis in southern and central Saskatchewan.

1938: (November/December). *The Metis Population Betterment Act* became law in Alberta.

1939: Joe “Z” LaRocque became the first president of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan.

1940: The Métis Association of Alberta was founded.

1941: The Saskatchewan Métis Society received \$10,000 from the provincial government in order to hire a law firm to demonstrate that the Métis possessed an outstanding “Indian” title to the land.

1943-45: Mr St. Denis served as president of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan.

1946: The provincial government funded a Saskatchewan Métis Society reorganization conference which tried to unite northern and southern Métis. The conference was unsuccessful.

1941: (September 16). Harry Daniels was born in Regina Beach, Saskatchewan.

1945: The Saskatchewan government bought the Oblate-run Métis farm in Lebret and later established other Métis farms in Baljennie, Crescent Lake, Crooked Lake, Duck Lake, Glen Mary, Green Lake, Lestock, and Willow Bunch in order to “rehabilitate” southern Métis.

1946: Fred DeLaronde and Joe Amyotte served as presidents of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan.

1960s: Métis political organizations existed in both the province’s north and south. The Métis Society of Saskatchewan, which was founded in 1964 and led by Joe Amyotte, represented Métis living in southern and central Saskatchewan; and the Métis Association of Saskatchewan, led by Malcolm Norris and supported by James Brady, represented northern Métis and Non-Status Indians.

1967: The Métis Society of Saskatchewan and the Métis Association of Saskatchewan merged, but kept the Métis Society of Saskatchewan as the new organization’s name.

1967: (June 7). James Brady went missing from Foster Lake region of Saskatchewan.

1967: (October 1). The Manitoba Métis Federation was founded.

1967: (December 5). Malcolm Norris died in Calgary.

1968: The Canadian Métis Society was formed after a split with the National Indian Council.

1969-71: Howard Adams served as president of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan.

1970: *New Breed* Magazine was founded.

1970: The modern Back to Batoche Days began.

1971-88: Jim Sinclair served as president of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan/ Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians.

1971: The Native Council of Canada was founded.

1973: Maria Campbell’s *Halfbreed* was published. Campbell’s book brought public attention to the Métis’ marginalization.

1975: The Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan was created after the province's Métis and Non-Status Indians realized that they faced many common issues as disenfranchised Aboriginal people.

1975: Howard Adam's *Prison of Grass* was published. Adams developed Indigenous colonization theory for a Canadian context.

1976: The Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians (AMNSIS) of Saskatchewan was founded.

1980: The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research was founded.

1982: The Métis were recognized as an Aboriginal people (s 35.2) in the repatriated Constitution. Harry Daniels was most responsible for putting the Métis in the Constitution.

1982: The National Métis Alliance of Saskatchewan was founded.

1983: The Louis Riel Métis Association of British Columbia was incorporated.

1985: The centenary of the 1885 Resistance occurred.

1988: (August). After a referendum within the membership, the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan dissolved, and a Métis-only political body, the Métis Society was reestablished.

1988: Clifford Laroque served as president of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan.

1988: The Province of Saskatchewan transferred the province's Métis farms to community-based Métis authorities.

1989-92: James Durocher served as president of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan.

1990: (November 1). The Alberta Métis Settlements Accord was implemented.

1992-95: Gerald Morin served as president of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan/Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.

1992: The *Métis Nation Accord* died as the *Charlottetown Accord* was rejected by a majority of Canadians in a national referendum.

1993: The Métis Society of Saskatchewan changed its name to the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.

1993: The Métis Society of Saskatchewan began a bilateral process with the province to advance Métis issues, particularly self-government. This process eventually became a tripartite partnership when the federal government was included.

1993: The Métis National Council was founded.

1994: (May). Métis in northwestern Saskatchewan filed a land claim in Court of Queen's Bench in Saskatoon.

1994: The Métis Nation of Ontario was formed.

1995-1998: James Durocher served as president of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.

1995: The Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and the Province of Saskatchewan signed a memorandum of understanding regarding management of the province's wildlife resources.

1995: *R. v. Morin and Daigneault*. Bruce Morin and Dennis Daigneault, from Turnor Lake, Saskatchewan, first had their court case heard in provincial court in Buffalo Narrows. The two were charged with fishing violations. The Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench affirmed that they had an Aboriginal right to harvest fish via s. 32 of the Constitution.

1995: *R. v. Grumbo*. In this case, John Grumbo (Grandbois) was charged under *The Wildlife Act* for receiving deer meat from a First Nations person. The appellant unsuccessfully argued before a provincial court in Yorkton that the Métis have an "Indian" right to hunt on unoccupied Crown lands via paragraph 12 of the 1930 *Natural Resources Transfer Agreement*.

1996: The Métis Provisional Council of British Columbia was founded.

1996: (April). Morin and Daigneault are acquitted for fishing without licenses because the court ruled that the 1906 Scrip Commission did not extinguish their Aboriginal rights to fish. The court ruling also decreed that this right was protected by s.35 of the Constitution.

1996: (August). John Grumbo was acquitted on an appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench. With this ruling, any person of Métis ancestry could hunt without a license in Saskatchewan, including Métis from outside the province.

1997: (September). The Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench upheld the April 1996 Morin and Daigneault ruling.

1998: (May). The Saskatchewan Court of Appeal overturned the Court of Queen's Bench decision in *R. v. Grumbo*. The court decided that they were not sure if the Métis had the same hunting rights as Indians via the 1930 *Natural Resources Transfer Agreement*.

1998: (May). Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management implemented a policy whereby Métis living in the Northern Administrative District had an Aboriginal right to hunt and fish. However, Métis living elsewhere in this province did not have this right.

1998-2004: Clément Chartier served as president of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan/Métis Nation—Saskatchewan

2002: (January 28, 2002). The Province of Saskatchewan proclaimed *The Métis Act*, which recognized the Métis as unique and founding people of the province. The act also strengthened the bilateral process through continued negotiations.

2003: (September 19). In *R. v. Powley*, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that the Métis appellants, Steve and Rod Powley, had an Aboriginal right to hunt through s. 32 of the Constitution. Further, this right could apply to any Métis living in the Métis Homeland if the Métis appellant could demonstrate a connection to a historic Métis community. The case impacted Métis case law across Canada.

2003: (September 19). In *R. v. Blais*, the Supreme Court of Canada declared that the Métis were not "Indians" under the hunting rights provision of the *Natural Resources Transfer Agreement*. The status

of Métis hunting rights awaited the province's final interpretation of the recent Supreme Court decisions, *R. v. Powley* and *R. v. Blais*, which argued that the Métis possess "Indian" hunting rights.

2004: (September 6). Harry Daniels died in Regina.

2005: (April 2005) In *R. v. Norton and Samuelson*, the Provincial Court of Saskatchewan rendered a decision which maintained that the Métis living in the Qu'Appelle Valley represented a rights-bearing community, and therefore had an Aboriginal right to hunt and fish.

2005: (July). In *R. v. Laviolette*, the Provincial Court of Saskatchewan argued that Métis living in northwestern Saskatchewan constituted a right-bearing community and they could harvest fauna.

2007: (May). Robert Doucette was elected president of Métis Nation—Saskatchewan.

2007: (October 19). In *R. v. Belhumeur*, the Saskatchewan Provincial Court ruled that Don Belhumeur, a Métis from Regina, had an Aboriginal right to fish without a licence because he belongs to an historic Métis community, which includes Regina and the Qu'Appelle Valley. This case used a key "test" from the 2003 Powley ruling whereby Aboriginal harvesting rights could be implemented in a region if a Métis appellant could prove connection to a historic Métis community. The Province of Saskatchewan still has not reversed its decision to allow Métis across the province the Aboriginal right to hunt and fish.

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