

Saskatchewan Métis Fact Sheet - Leah Dorion

The Métis have made great contributions to communities across Saskatchewan. They have participated in many of Saskatchewan's economies such as the fur trade, buffalo hunt and agricultural economies. Many Saskatchewan communities began as Métis settlements. These roles have largely gone unrecognized by past historians. Today, the Métis are being collectively recognized for their role in developing their communities, provinces and country. This fact sheet is a small sample of the events, activities, histories and contributions of the Saskatchewan Métis.

Cumberland House, Saskatchewan

- * Did you know that Cumberland House is the oldest Métis community in Saskatchewan? The Hudson's Bay Company's Samuel Hearne established it in 1774.
- * Did you know that many Métis people from Cumberland House and other communities used to work as steamboat operators?
- * Did you know that A.K Isbister, a Métis from Cumberland House, started the University of Manitoba and was one of Western Canada's first Geologists?
- * Did you know that one of the Franklin expeditions traveled through Cumberland House on route to the Arctic?
- * Did you know that muskrat trapping was an important part of the local economy in Cumberland House?
- * During the World Wars many Métis women took over the hunting and trapping role. Some of these Métis women continued trap even when the men returned.
- * Until 1996, the only way to reach the community was by canoe, boat or ferry.

Prince Albert, Saskatchewan

- * James Isbister, a Métis, was the first person in Saskatchewan to cultivate wheat. He was also the first farmer in what is today Prince Albert.

* Did you know that Louis Dorion, a Métis from Prince Albert, was the first Aboriginal person to hold a Master Official Badge for competitive speed swimming in North America?

* Did you know that many Métis families originally farmed river lots in Prince Albert in the early 1800s?

* Did you know that Prince Albert hosted the Indigenous games in 1993? Many Métis successfully contributed to this event.

* Did you know that a Prince Albert based Indian-Métis women's volleyball team won the gold medal for Saskatchewan at the 1993 Indigenous games?

* Did you know that the first annual Prince Albert Métis Fall Festival was held in September 1995?

Batoche, Saskatchewan

* Did you know that the Métis still gather annually for Batoche Days to celebrate and remember the Métis experience at Batoche?

* Did you know that Batoche is recognized as a National Historical Park with a state of the art audio-visual slide show on the events surrounding the Métis resistance at Batoche in 1885?

* Did you know that Louis Riel led the resistance in 1885 and that Gabriel Dumont served as his military captain?

* Did you know that Gabriel Dumont ran the only ferry in the region at Gabriel's Crossing? Dumont's ferry was a flat scow 27ft long and 12 ft wide and capable of carrying 4 Red River carts or 2 wagons.

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

* Did you know that Métis Nation - Saskatchewan's main office is located in Saskatoon?

* Did you know that the Métis used to winter in the region of present day Saskatoon?

Ile a la Crosse, Saskatchewan

* Did you know that the Cree and Chipewyan (Dene) met at an annual lacrosse game, which Benjamin Frobisher saw in 1777? This event provided the community with its name of Ile a la Crosse.

* In 1776 Alexander Henry and Joseph of the North West Company began to trade in the Ile a la Crosse region.

* Did you know that in 1871, Sister Sarah Riel arrived in the community? She was the sister of Louis Riel.

* In 1846 Father's Lafleche and Tache arrived at Ile a la Crosse to do spiritual work and prepare to build a mission. This mission became the educational centre for many Métis children.

* In 1906 and 1907 Scrip commissioners came to Ile a la Crosse to issue land and money grants to the local Métis. McKenna, a government commissioner, noted that he came during an enthusiastic summer celebration in the community where dancing, feasting and canoe races were focal events.

La Loche, Saskatchewan

* Did you know that many Métis worked as traders, transporters and labourers with the famous La Loche brigade that transported furs and goods to various Hudson's Bay Company outposts? These portage trails that were walked on for centuries are still intact today.

* Did you know that some Métis today work for northern mining and forestry industries? Northern Métis are still dependant on the land and resources.

* Did you know that scrip commissioners visited La Loche in 1906-1907 to issue scrip to the Métis?

* Did you know that in 1994 the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan filed a land claim for traditional Métis lands in this northwestern region of Saskatchewan?

* Did you know that La Loche is the end of the highway in northwestern Saskatchewan?

Willow Bunch, Saskatchewan

*The Métis buffalo hunters and Métis traders used to winter at Willow Bunch.

*The Métis were influential in the creation of the Willow Bunch mission.

* Many Métis from Willow Bunch became successful ranchers and cowboys due to their useful skills from Buffalo hunting.

* During the WWI and WWII many Métis from Willow Bunch participated in the wars. This is common in almost every Métis community and had a huge impact on the women and children remaining in the communities.

* Did you know that during the late 1800s Métis in what is now southern Saskatchewan earned an income by collecting buffalo bones and working on the railway?

Green Lake, Saskatchewan

* Did you know that the Métis were given 12 townships from the CCF government in the 1940s? This is the only recognized government collective land base granted to Métis in Saskatchewan.

* Did you know that Angus McKay ran a Hudson's Bay Company post at Green Lake in the late 1800s? Angus McKay like many other fur trade employees married an Aboriginal woman and supported a large Métis fur trade family.

* Did you know that Rod Bishop, a former mayor of Green Lake went all the way to Europe to lobby for land rights of the Métis?

La Ronge, Saskatchewan

* Did you Jim Brady, a Métis activist in the 1930s-1940s, lived in La Ronge? His small log cabin is still present in the town.

* Did you know that many Métis from La Ronge and other northern Communities such as Buffalo Narrows participate in Wild Rice Harvesting?

* Did you know that many Métis participated in commercial fisheries in La Ronge and other northern communities?

* Did you know that many Métis still act and guides for fish camps and hunting camps?

St. Louis, Saskatchewan

* Did you know that NHL hockey player Richard Pilon was from St. Louis?

* Howard Adams, a Métis born in St. Louis, was one the first Métis people in Saskatchewan to obtain his Ph.D in History in Berkeley, California.

* Did you know that many Métis from St. Louis are excellent chariot and chuck wagon drivers?