

# THE MÉTIS & RED RIVER

## IDENTITY >

RED RIVER SETTLEMENT 1870

## WHO ARE THE MÉTIS?

"**racialized logic**" of intermarriages as the origin of the Métis does not give credit to the politically conscious actions that the Métis took to be recognized.

Métis identity must thus be understood as the process of "**narrating nation**." Nationhood is crafted from the "stories, images, landscapes... historical events, [and] symbols" that a people experience; elements of culture, such as language and traditions, are also important in cementing that identity, but it is through events that collective consciousness is formed.

The Métis National Council defines the Métis as a "**distinct** Indigenous people and **nation**" that emerged in the late 18th century in the Northwest from marriages between Indigenous women and European fur traders.

Although these relationships are important, they do not explain how the Métis' sense of nationhood was formed. Focusing on the

## Métis nationhood can be understood through five pivotal events:

### 1 The Battle of Seven Oaks

1816

The Métis 'ordeal by fire'; Seven Oaks represents Métis protection of self-interests, refusal of imposed HBC agricultural policies, and resistance against the Selkirk colony.

### 2 The Trial of Pierre Sayer

1845

The Métis oppose the trade monopoly and surround the courthouse during the trial, intimidating the judge. Their stand creates an economic niche for Métis traders.

### 3 The Battle of Grand Coteau

1851

The Sioux challenge cements Métis hunters' sense of "horizontal comradeship."



### 4 The Red River Resistance

1869-1870

Canada tries to expand West onto Métis land, but leaders at **Red River** force the Canadian government to recognize Métis land interest and identity by negotiating the **Manitoba Act**.

### 5 The Northwest Resistance

1885

Although Louis Riel and the provisional government in Saskatchewan are crushed, the event continues to inspire dreams of Métis autonomy in the West.

## APPROPRIATION >

## CLAIMING MÉTIS HERITAGE

Métis nationhood stems directly from **historical** conflicts and diplomacy interactions that centre around the 'Red River core.'

However, increasing numbers of people in Quebec and the Maritimes are claiming Métis heritage despite the lack of historic Métis communities there. This is a racially-mixed "**settler-colonial self-adoption fantasy**." Métis citizenship requires not only self-identification, but also ancestral connection to the historic Métis community and acceptance by the modern Métis community.

## MANITOBA >

## PROMISES VS REALITY

Today's Manitoba is not what was envisioned by the Métis during the Red River negotiations with Canada. When Canada sent land surveyors West to plan plots for settlers, the Métis responded by setting up a **provisional government**. Canada then needed to negotiate with the Métis in **nation-to-nation** talks.

**Three** key items were bilaterally negotiated, but were not implemented once British soldiers occupied Red River and denied a civil transfer of power. This made the province a 'settler-colonial' Manitoba instead of a 'treaty' Manitoba.

- 1 Métis would keep their current land holdings; 1.4 million acres would also be set aside for Métis children.
- 2 Parity of language to ensure political equality of Métis.
- 3 Entrenched senate powers to protect Métis rights against influxes of settlers

**Canada is still obligated to create land reserves and ensure Métis political power to fulfill the agreed-upon treaty.**

Sources:  
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Gaudry, Adam. "Are the Métis Treaty People?" 2016. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8b5QFB539&ab\\_channel=UWinnipeg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8b5QFB539&ab_channel=UWinnipeg)

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Métis National Council, <https://www2.metisnation.ca/>

