

Who Are the Métis People?

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Remember, 'ti Jean, we are a people set apart. With one foot planted in our white European ancestry and the other foot planted in the timeless, tribal customs of the Indians, we belong wholly to neither and, as a result, hold on to each other and our traditions all the more tightly.

- As told to Senator John Boucher by his Grandmother, cited on the Métis National Council website: <<http://metisnation.ca/MNA/defining1.html>>



We Métis are the descendants of Indian women who lived freely on the Plains of Western Canada and who were masters of their realm. We Métis are also the descendants of French coureurs de Bois, who worked for both the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in order to make commerce in the fur trade. Our heritage is of a unique race, which has the right to live freely and proudly and to be masters of our destiny. We are also called "Bois-brûlés" because of the colour of our skin but we prefer the name Métis from the French verb "métisser" to mix races.

- Louis Riel, translated by Darren R. Préfontaine; as cited in Métis Identity, The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture: <<http://www.metismuseum.ca/main.php>>



I am, and we should all be proud of being Métis as we are the progeny of the best of two peoples.

- Adrian Hope, Kikino Métis Settlement; as cited on the Métis Culture & Heritage Resource Centre Inc. website: <<http://www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca/quotes/>>



It is necessary to watch them and manage them with great care, otherwise, they may become the most formidable enemy to which the settlement is exposed.

- Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company George Simpson (1824) writing to fur trade merchant Simon McTavish; as cited on the Métis Culture & Heritage Resource Centre Inc. website: <<http://www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca/quotes/>>



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Who are the Métis? This is a contentious question with no definitive answer. Numerous Métis political organizations and individuals have their own definitions as does the Canadian government and the larger society. The Métis are unique in that they are the first North Americans to emerge from both Indigenous (Algonquian, Athapascan, Iroquian, and Siouxan) and European peoples. Métis heritage evolves around the civilizations of Indigenous America and of Western Europe. Not surprisingly, the Métis borrowed much from their First Nations, French, French-Canadian, Celtic, and English parent cultures. However, their culture was distinct from these other cultures: the historic Métis took what they needed and perfected a unique hybrid culture.

Source: The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, The Métis: Our People, Our Story, Teacher's Guide: <<http://www.metismuseum.ca/main.php>>

National Definitions:

"Métis" means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry, is distinct from other Aboriginal Peoples and is accepted by the Métis Nation.

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

"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.

"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 section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

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

- moved and carried unanimously by the members of the Métis National Council, September 27, 2002: <<http://www.metisnation.ca/>>

