

Métis Land Rights and Hunting Rights

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It was not until 1982 that Canada recognized the Métis as one of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The government has not yet, however, recognized land claims for this people, as they have for First Nations and Inuit peoples.

In September 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada recognized Métis hunting rights—that is, the right to hunt without a license and out of season on Canadian land in the area of their local community.

It is difficult to define the traditional territories of the Métis communities. This is because the Métis were originally semi-nomadic, following the paths of the bison through the hunting season and returning to the woodlands communities for the winter. Also, the Métis gradually moved westward as the bison grew more and more rare.

The central homeland of the Métis nation is in the region of the Red River valley. But there are also communities along the fur trade routes from the Great Lakes area (e.g., Sault Ste. Marie and Fort Frances in Ontario), along the Winnipeg River system, along the North and South Saskatchewan rivers, into British Columbia (e.g., Fort Nelson), and into the northern territories. The traditional bison hunt region in the plains also extended into the northern part of the United States.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, a system called "scrip" was set up by the government, instead of setting aside reserve land for the Métis people who were being displaced by colonial settlements. Under this system, Métis community members were given a certificate for a certain amount of money to be redeemed for land or for cash. (Land was estimated by the government at a value of \$1.00 per acre.) Many of these certificates were sold for cash by needy communities, or traded for goods and provisions. Others were bought and sold illegally by people who were eager to make a profit on land in western Canada as more immigrants came to settle in this area.

The only part of the Métis homeland region that has Métis settlement lands set aside for the Métis people is Alberta. As a result, the Métis are still in the process of debating questions of the right to officially recognized territories and rights with the government of Canada.

