

# TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

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## *English 12 First Peoples*

APRIL 2008



first nations education  
steering committee

[www.fnesc.ca](http://www.fnesc.ca)

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## UNIT 12: MÉTIS LITERATURE

### OVERVIEW

This unit on Métis literature is presented in six parts: Introduction, Novel Study I, Novel Study II, Poetry, Drama, and Humour.

The introduction will give students and teachers a sense of Métis history and culture from the historic fur trading days to contemporary times as well as raise broader questions about nationhood and personal identity. Teachers may wish to use part or all of this section.

The extensive novel study introduces students to Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*, a groundbreaking work not only for the Métis, but also in terms of raising awareness of issues for all Canadian Aboriginal peoples. Questions of identity in the novel link to history and family, and in more contemporary times to extended social community.

The third part looks at selections from *In Search of April Raintree* by Beatrice Culleton Mosionier, and examines how Métis people establish identity when their ties to history, family, and community have been cut by foster care and alienation. This part also examines the tragedies that occur when identity is lost.

The poetry study looks at how Métis poets tackle the question of identity in many different ways. Poems that have similar stylistic or formal characteristics have been paired for study. Poets Emma LaRocque, Joanne Arnott, Joan Crate, Marilyn Dumont, and Gregory Scofield are featured. The question of two-spiritedness is examined with regard to Scofield's work.

The drama study features selections from *Age of Iron*. Playwright Marie Clements has been described as using cutting-edge and unusual theatrical techniques in her plays. This avant-garde play crosses time and history to link Aboriginal people to world themes without losing sight of their particular struggles.

This final section examines humour in Ian Ross's *Joe from Winnipeg* series that allows for a gentle and personal criticism of social conditions.

### LESSON PLANS IN THIS UNIT:

#### Part I: Introduction – Métis History and Culture

Who are the Métis?  
What is a Nation? Group Research Assignments  
Research Time (may be extended to two classes)  
Research Presentations and Summary (may be extended to two classes) Introduction  
Reflection (80 marks)  
Cultural Day or Guest Speaker

#### Handouts and Assessment Tools:

Research Evaluation  
Métis Contributions to Canada  
The Métis People of Canada  
Time Line – Métis History, Early Years

#### Part II: Novel Study: *Halfbreed* by Maria Campbell

A Living, Personal Sense of Métis History

A Living, Personal Sense of Métis History: Chapter Questions  
Summary of Novel Study and Section Assignment

**Handouts and Assessment Tools:**

Ancestral Chart

**Part III: Novel Study: Selections, In Search of April Raintree by Beatrice Culleton  
Masionier**

Concepts of Métis Identity, Lost Identity, and History  
Themes in the Novel  
Presentation of Oral Assignments

**Part IV: Poetry Study: Métis Poets**

Emma LaRocque and Joanne Arnott  
Joan Crate and Marilyn Dumont  
Gregory Scofield

**Handouts and Assessment Tools:**

Poetry Poster Assignment—“Can You Hear Me?” and “Leather and Naughahyde”  
Two-Spiritedness

**Part V: Drama Study: *Age of Iron* by Marie Clements**

Aboriginal Connections, Avant-garde  
Presentation of Theatre Assignments

**Handouts and Assessment Tools:**

Humour: Performance Piece

**Part VI: Humour: *Joe from Winnipeg* by Ian Ross**

Student Presentations

**Handouts and Assessment Tools:**

Cold and Sorries by Ian Ross  
Global Warming by Ian Ross

**Bibliography and Further Resources**

Special thanks to Aboriginal Education, School District 68 Nanaimo Ladysmith and the Mid Island Métis Nation for permitting the use of materials developed by Donna Elwood Flett when she served as Métis Liaison 1999-2001.

## **PART I: INTRODUCTION—MÉTIS HISTORY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW**

The Métis have often been called *The Forgotten People* because they have been marginalized in history through exclusion from the governmental financial structures that feature in First Nations communities, and from broad treaty-land claims processes. Often there is a lot of confusion about who the Métis were and are.

The purpose of the introductory lessons is to give students a historical understanding of the Métis people so that they will have sufficient background knowledge to appreciate the literature in these terms. Many Métis writers refer to events in Métis history and to Métis historic figures. Teachers may choose to shorten this section in whatever way suits their purpose depending on their time, needs, and the prior knowledge of their students.

Teachers may wish to review ahead of time the “Timeline,” “Métis Contributions to Canada,” and “The Métis People of Canada” documents in the Resources folder/file.

### *The Importance of Identity*

The Métis are a people who have long wrestled with the concept of identity. This has occurred in part because of government-required definitions with regard to rights of Métis citizens as they become enshrined in government charters and as part of government funding arrangements and potential land claims settlements. In addition, many people in the general Canadian population are confused as to whether children of more contemporary marriages between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are Métis simply because they are mixed-blood. The situation is made more complex because of the American definition of Métis as people of mixed blood who are French, not Aboriginal. Some Métis social and community agencies will accept people as Métis who simply self-identify as such and join in. The situation of identity confusion was further complicated before Bill C-31 Indians regained their status, and had identified as Métis in the meantime ([http://www.Métis.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=8](http://www.Métis.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=8)).

One definition of Métis was made in 2003 by the Supreme Court of Canada: “The Supreme Court of Canada upheld in the Powley case this constitutional definition by saying that: ‘Métis community is a group of Métis with a distinctive collective identity, living together in the same geographical area and sharing a common way of life.’” (faculty.law.ubc.ca/mccue/files/320D/submissions/The%20Métis%20National%20Council%20Submission.doc)

The Métis National Council accepts the following definition for citizenship: 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” (<http://www.Métisnation.ca/who/definition.html>).

This is the definition currently accepted by most Métis communities and peoples. The Métis Nation of B.C. definition is very close to that of the national governing body: “Métis/Michif/Apeetha’kosian” means a person who self identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of Historic Métis Nation ancestry and, is accepted by the Métis Nation British Columbia” ([http://mpebc.ca/pdf/citizenship\\_rg.pdf](http://mpebc.ca/pdf/citizenship_rg.pdf)).

On a more personal level, Métis people often struggle with questions of identity in terms of what it means to them in their lifetime, what Métis means to their concept of themselves as human beings, and to their feelings. This is a theme that recurs, and recurs strongly, in Métis literature. Let us borrow for a moment a quote from David Ipinia, a Yurok Indian Artist: “Being Indian is mainly in your heart. It's a way of walking with the earth instead of upon it.” For Métis, this

means finding out in your heart what it means to be Métis. The question is a complex and personal one, but it begins with history.

## *Who are the Métis?*

**Learning Outcomes:** A2, A3, A4, A5; A9, A11, B5, B8, B9, C1, C2, C6, C8, C9, C11

### **Suggested Activity Sequence**

**Supplies:** flip chart, roll of newsprint, felts, scissors, tape or glue. Prepare the **YES**, **MAYBE**, and **NO** sheets of newsprint ahead of time (see below) and post them around room, or have them ready for posting.

1. Introduce the fact that this is a special unit in English 12 First Peoples, which has to do with Métis people. Say that the class will begin with a “What I Know” activity, since one of the nicknames for the Métis is *The Forgotten People* and you would like them to remember everything they might know about the Métis instead. Say the lesson will rely on discussion and group-work. Display the “Participation in Group Discussions and Activities” rubric on an overhead or hand out copies and explain that there will be a teacher evaluation and a self-evaluation at the end of the lesson (found on page Unit 1 of the Teacher Resource Guide).
2. Ask for a volunteer class recorder, or several who can take turns recording. Ask what students know about the Métis. Have the recorders write each idea down in a box with a space between ideas so that the ideas can be cut apart later.
3. When students have exhausted their ideas/suggestions of *everything and anything* they know about the Métis (which may include just names of Métis people, such as Louis Riel) inform the students that they will now review the list of statements/suggestions and divide them into **YES**, **MAYBE**, and **NO** lists based on how probable/improbable or true/false the class as a whole believes each statement to be with regard to the Métis.

Assign your class to do this task in whichever way works best for you and your students. One method is very active: You might assign some students to cut up the idea lists in preparation for the whole-class activity while the rest of the students discuss the idea lists with their neighbours, or let the students themselves cut apart the ideas as they decide which list to put them on. Whichever method you use to separate the idea statements, student should take one statement at a time and go tape it onto the **YES**, **MAYBE**, and **NO** list where he or she believes it belongs until all the ideas are used up. You may wish to set a time limit on this portion of the activity. Have all students return to their seats and have the entire class review each of the **YES**, **MAYBE**, and **NO** lists, re-allocating statements when the class as a whole thinks the statement belongs on a different list. This will encourage collaboration and discussions amongst students and it will get students out of their desks, physically participating. It also ensures that students who are shy or retiring will be able to participate without feeling they are in a spotlight. In addition, this strategy stimulates more sharing of knowledge and elevates the group knowledge pool. Another method is to have the teacher read out each idea statement and, after a class discussion about where it belongs, tape it on one of the sort lists.

4. Once the **YES**, **MAYBE**, and **NO** lists are complete and have been reviewed, discuss the results and proceed to activity step #5.

5. Have the class as a whole make up a “What We Need to Know About the Métis” chart through class discussion or Q-A (whatever works best for your class). Leave that chart up in a corner of your classroom for reference throughout the unit whenever the occasion presents itself. Take down the original **YES**, **MAYBE**, and **NO** lists and let students know that they will be used again near the end of the unit.
6. Leave time for student self-evaluation and journal assignment.

### **Assessment/Evaluation**

1. **Teacher checklist for student participation (5 marks):** This is simply a class list with space or boxes beside each student’s name for checks when the student participates by questions, suggestions, discussion, comments, enthusiasm in making up lists, etc. However, it is based on the rubric. One extra point will be given for overall performance.
2. **Student self evaluation (5 marks):** Students should submit self evaluation sheets (or, a copy of the rubric) on which they have given themselves a mark out of 4 for their participation. They should write down at least two good, short reasons (that are not simply copied from the rubric) that explain why they believe they deserve this mark. One extra point will be given by the teacher for the reasons if they show accurate and serious reflection.
3. **Students should do a quick journal entry on the class activity (10 marks).** Journal entries will be marked and used frequently as a reflection strategy. Students might ask themselves if they agreed with all of the statement sorts and give reasons why they thought a statement might belong somewhere else. They might reflect on the success or failure of the activity process (physical participation, individualism within group work). They might disclose in their journal some thoughts they had about the Métis but did not wish to share in class. Students should submit their entries for marking prior to leaving the class.

**TOTAL: 20 marks**

## ***What is a Nation? Group Research Assignments***

**Learning Outcomes:** A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A12, B2, B8, B9, B11, C1, C2, C8, C9

**Supplies:** flip chart or roll of newsprint, felts, “Timeline,” “Métis Contributions to Canada,” and “The Métis People of Canada” documents in the Resources section at the end of Part I of this unit.

### **Introduction**

A sense of history and historical events feature strongly in Métis identity and literature.

In this lesson, students will explore what makes up a community’s sense of identity or nationhood, and how that contributes to an individual’s sense of identity.

Teachers will then break their students up into groups for a small research project that will be a class jigsaw in order to facilitate speedy acquisition of a number of key Métis historical facts and stories.

### **Suggested Activity Sequence**

1. Introduce the lesson as one that will deal with the idea of nationhood and identity. Say the lesson will rely on discussion and group work. Display the “Participation in Group Discussions and Activities” rubric on an overhead or hand out copies, and explain there will be a teacher evaluation and a self-evaluation at the end of the lesson.
2. Ask students to think of all the things that make a people feel like a community and nation. What do people need to become a nation? Think of what countries and peoples *use* or *do* in order to identify as a community or a people. Record all responses on a flip chart, or have students do this. This activity can also be done by first breaking the class into smaller groups to brainstorm and then asking each group to report out later to the entire class when it reconvenes. If this latter strategy is used the teacher can circulate amongst the small groups to help facilitate discussion, to draw in quiet students, and to mark for participation. This approach might be less threatening to students who are shy.
3. After the groups report out, or at the end of the whole class discussion, the list will most likely include some if not all of these items:
  - a land base
  - a language
  - a flag
  - arts and culture
  - a government and laws
  - heroes and heroines
  - a shared history that extends from the past to the present
4. Once the class has devised its list and has filled in any blank spots through discussion, distribute the resource documents and give the students time to read them. Go over the documents with the class. Discuss any comments from students; facilitate discussion. Ask if they think there is enough information from the documents to qualify the Métis as a nation of people. Discuss. Why or why not?

**NOTE:** Some students might express the opinion that the Métis are not a nation, others may adamantly assert that they are a nation with full rights to make their own laws, etc. Some students might wish to see the Métis as a nation but without any rights. Some students might even suggest that the Métis are not an Aboriginal people. All ideas should be accepted, respected, and explored. However, students should be prepared to defend their decisions with sound reasoning and debate in a non-personal, non-confrontational style. Teachers may wish to host a horseshoe debate on this issue if there is enough diverse opinion in the class and enough time; this debate would require moderation.
5. Following this discussion, students should write a journal entry about what makes a nation; they should examine their own opinions about the Métis as a nation and as an Aboriginal people. See below for evaluation. Collect in journals for marking.
6. Break the class into groups (in the method which suits you best) to prepare for and assign small-group research projects. This will be a jigsaw, information-sharing project. Each group will pick (or be assigned) a topic on one aspect of nationhood to research and

report on. This will accelerate the class's acquisition of a deeper understanding of Métis history and culture. Teachers should ensure that student groups don't all gravitate to one theme or subject (e.g., culture), so that there is a good balance of research. Students can do their presentations in any way they see fit; for example, someone presenting on Arts and Culture might want to give the class a mini Red River Jig lesson. Students researching Michif might want to present an online introductory lesson for a few minutes using a computer and Internet hookup, if available. Students in groups may wish to divide their task up so that each group constitutes a jigsaw in itself; this is easily done for the Métis personages or for historical events where each student can research and/or present one. Students may also wish to present as a group. Whichever method is chosen, each student should be prepared to be part of the actual group presentation to the class (i.e. to speak or demonstrate, etc.). Research groups might break down according to topic groupings such as:

- Major personalities from the past: Riel, Dumont, Grant, Potts
  - Modern day personalities: Cardinal, Brady and Norris, Bethune, Campbell
  - Language, flags
  - Music, dance, beadwork, Métis sash, moose hair tufting, silk embroidery
  - Buffalo laws and governance in historic Métis communities; Lists of Métis Rights during historic struggles at Red River and in the Northwest
  - Modern Métis rights, modern court cases, rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms 1982
  - Key historic events in Métis history prior to 1900 (e.g., Battle of Seven Oaks, Selkirk Settlement, Red River Resistance, Northwest Insurgence)
  - Modern Métis land settlements, The Road Allowance People, Métis Veterans, Richard Cardinal and the change in family law in Alberta
7. Establish the criteria for the research assignment and discuss. It might be a good idea to give students copies of the evaluation sheet (at the end of the lesson) to help guide their work. Students will be marked independently, and all will have a chance to present to the class. A cohesive group presentation is required. Research may take one or two classes; presentations may take one or two classes. Many good online resources exist. Assuming a group of four, each *group* presentation will probably be approximately 15 minutes, or as the teacher determines.

Evaluation time for this lesson's in-class activity: Teachers might do their evaluation while circulating through the class listening to the groups discuss how they will do their projects, or how they will break down individual topics and still keep a unified thematic presentation.

### **Assessment/Evaluation**

1. For the in-class activity, using the "Participation in Group Discussions and Activities" rubric: **5 marks** from the teacher; **5 marks** for student self-evaluation; same procedure as outlined for Lesson One so that the mark becomes out of 5 instead of out of four in each case.  
**10 marks**
2. Journal entry assignment. See step #5 in the Suggested Activity Sequence.  
**10 marks**

**TOTAL: 20 marks**

**Online resource suggestions**

- See The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture for audio, video, photo, and text information on a huge variety of topics: [http://www.Métis\\_museum.ca/](http://www.Métis_museum.ca/)
- See the Métis Nation of B.C. web site for links to all sorts of material: <http://www.mpcbc.bc.ca/>
- For Michif audio and lessons see the web site above and link from the bottom right of the home page: <http://www.learnmichif.com/>.
- For culture, see the Michif page above, which has a culture link (<http://www.learnmichif.com/Métis-culture>) that has many more Métis links at the bottom of its page. From the Michif home page you can click on the video files and find a young Métis fiddle player speaking about Métis music, hear some storytelling and an autobiography, get a lesson in making bannock, listen to a contemporary musician/video artist, etc.
- The Métis Nation of Ontario also has a good Culture and History page—make sure to check the top toolbar, not just the left quicklinks: <http://www.Métisnation.org/>
- The Métis Culture & Heritage Resource Centre Inc. is a treasure trove of information with its rich menu on the left: <http://www.Métisresourcecentre.mb.ca/>
- Wikipedia is a good starting point for many topics pertaining to the Métis.
- Jigging videos can be found on Google Videos with the search “Métis Jigging,” but teachers should screen them beforehand as some are not appropriate or instructive and the posted videos can change. The jigging videos that come from competition celebrations are generally better quality and more instructive. Teachers can also find an excellent Métis fiddle video called “Kelly Atcheynum-Fiddle Medley” on YouTube.
- <http://www.ualberta.ca/~walld/ab2intro.html> has some excellent information on the Métis lands settlements issues in Alberta, with references. See also: [http://www.albertasource.ca/metis/eng/people\\_and\\_communities/issues\\_betterment.htm](http://www.albertasource.ca/metis/eng/people_and_communities/issues_betterment.htm) .

**RESEARCH EVALUATION**

**OVERALL VALUE: 50 marks**

**NAME:**

**GROUP TOPIC:**

**INDIVIDUAL TOPIC:**

You will be marked on your individual contribution to the group topic but also evaluated according to group cooperation. This last mark will be peer awarded by others in your group.

<b>Oral Speaking Skills</b>	<b>Visual Aids</b>	<b>Interactive Presentation Skills</b>	<b>Value of Information Presented to foster class understanding</b>	<b>Creativity</b>	<b>Evidence of Strong Research &amp; Preparation</b>	<b>Cooperation with group in overall presentation (peer evaluation included)</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>

## ***Research Time***

**Learning Outcomes:** A2, A6, B2, B3, B4

### **Introduction**

This class will be in a computer lab and/or library. Depending on how complicated student projects get, research may be extended to two classes. Remind students about the overall group presentation time.

### **Assessment/Evaluation**

Remind students of the evaluation sheet and the criteria you established as they do their research. No marks for this class unless the teacher is recording cooperation, attentiveness to task, etc.

## ***Research Presentations and Summary***

**Learning Outcomes:** A6, A7, A13

### **Introduction**

Teachers should remind students of the criteria for evaluation and the evaluation sheet, and that there will be a peer mark out of five (which can be averaged later) for each presenter that is part of the group. Peer evaluations should have the evaluator's name on them in addition to the student being evaluated. Peer evaluations should be done immediately following a group's presentation or they may be quietly and unobtrusively done by a group student who is not presenting, and handed in immediately.

### **Suggested Activity Sequence**

Schedule the presentations as you see fit and find convenient. The presentations may go longer than one class.

### **Summary/Concluding Activity**

The class as a whole might have a short discussion on the presentations and refer to their "What We Need to Know About the Métis" list from Lesson One. Did they get all their questions answered or are there still a few holes? If there are pieces missing, some volunteer students could acquire extra marks by bringing the answers to the next class.

### **Important questions to pose as a retrospective of the introductory activities so far:**

- Are the Métis People of Canada a nation? An Aboriginal people?
- How strongly do you think Métis history and culture influences the identity of Métis individuals today?
- What key events do you think might feature strongly in a sense of a Métis individual's identity? Why? How do you think this history might make a Métis individual feel?

It is important to emphasize that while the Métis are proud of their early history and the strong sense of culture that arose out of that time, there is a deep sense of betrayal and hurt in the events of the latter part of the 1800s and the early to mid-1900s when Métis suffered from traumas of racism, government land policies, residential schools, addictions, and community violence.

Students might consider how this would affect a Métis individual's sense of identity in today's world as part of their journal response.

Presentations are never a sure fit into schedules. If possible, a small part of the last presentation day might be spent on deciding if the class wishes to have a Métis Cultural Day or guest speakers. If the class wishes to have speakers, a few students might be designated to contact a local Métis organization to arrange details. This visit may not directly follow these introductory lessons, depending on time commitments of individuals.

## **ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION**

### **1. Presentation Assignment**

See rubric provided for this assignment in the lesson "What is a Nation?" As students present, their group peers should quickly make a comment and give a mark out of 5 on a small piece of paper that the teacher can collect at the end of each group's presentation. Remind evaluators that they should have their name and the name of the student they are evaluating on their peer assessment.

**50 marks**

### **2. Take Home Assignment—Two page essay in journal**

Students should reflect about the introductory activities and summary discussion, and answer the questions that were posed in their own way. Those questions, again, were:

- Are the Métis People of Canada a nation?
- An Aboriginal people?
- How strongly do you think Métis history and culture influences the identity of Métis individuals today?
- What key events do you think might feature strongly in a sense of a Métis individual's identity? Why? How do you think this history might make a Métis individual feel?

This essay will be in the form of personal journal reflection, but all the rules of grammar and good writing will apply. Students should have clear topic sentences for each part of the essay that begins to discuss the questions. Opinions should be backed by sound argument.

**30 marks**

**Total: 80 marks**

### ***Cultural Day or Guest Speaker***

As mentioned in an earlier lesson, this can be a day when guest speakers come in or when the class decides to have a mini cultural day of its own. To find local Métis people who may be available for presentations, contact your local Métis association, or the provincial office. Provincial local associations are listed at: <http://www.mnbc.ca/contact/locals.html>.

## MÉTIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO CANADA

Not all of the events listed here were positive for the Métis; however, they did contribute to the development of the country we now know as Canada.

<b>Person, Invention, or Event</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Red River Cart	Allowed long distance travel over prairie with heavy loads, can convert to barge for river crossing.
York Boat (adapted)	Allowed for even heavier loads to be transported via water routes as distances between forts/settlements increased.
Pemmican	Canada's first 'survival' food. Allowed winter and long-distance travel without the need to restock supplies along the way. Contained all the essential nutrients. Whether you regard this as a culinary delight depends on your personal taste.
Bannock	Culinary delight.
Saskatoon Berry Jam	Culinary delight.
Flower beadwork	Art/beauty that endures to this day.
Silk embroidery in Métis style	Art/beauty that endures to this day.
Moose Hair tufting	Art/beauty that endures to this day.
Michif language	Cultural richness and diversity.
Multi-lingual talents	Broadened the language of the fur trade, thus the areas of trade. Métis became translators, guides, and negotiators.
Talent for adaptation in careers	Allowed for settlement west. Métis were guides, translators, outfitters, and negotiators between Europeans, others moving west, and First Nations peoples.
Music, especially fiddle music	Cultural richness and diversity.
Stories	Cultural richness and diversity.
Dance, especially the Red River Jig	Cultural richness and diversity.
Interlocking corners on log cabins	Saved time in construction; stronger structure. (Prior to this innovation, corners were constructed using a corner post joint with slots into which notched planks were dropped to build up a wall; this involved time-consuming, accurate woodwork.)
Modern road and highway routes	Many of our modern highways and roads travel over the Red River cart trails from earlier days.
Mapping	Exploration, travel.
Settlements of the prairies	Occupied land, opened the way for Canada to claim it as part of the new, growing country.
Farming of the prairies	Broke the land, attracted more settlement.

<b>Person, Invention, or Event</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Securing of the West Coast for Canada	Many Métis were sent by the Hudson’s Bay as traders to establish forts and settlements and prevent the United States and others from claiming lands on what is now Canada’s West Coast. In the late 1800s Métis were in the current-day U.S. states of Washington and Oregon.
Cowboys	Métis became expert ranch hands and accurate sharpshooters.
Tourism	As early as the mid-1800s, Europeans collected Métis beadwork embroidery, weaving, clothing, etc. to take back with them to Europe. Tourism of the cowboy west/guest ranch and stampede events owes something to Métis contributions.
CPR	In a rather backhanded way, the Métis uprising in the Northwest hastened the building of the trans-Canada railway. The work was completed with the aim of quickly transporting Canadian troops to fight the Métis in what is now Saskatchewan and to make the region “safe” by making communication and travel faster between the west and the rest of Canada in the east.
Hudson’s Bay Company	Many of the Chief Factors, wintering partners, and working men of the HBC were Métis. They were especially well positioned for their jobs, having kindred connections with First Nations peoples, being knowledgeable about the land, and being hardy and able to adapt to new situations as they found them on the trail.
World War I and II, Korea	Métis were known as sharpshooters and were often employed as snipers in the world wars. Henry Nor’West is a famous example.
Cuthbert Grant	Renowned hunter, horseman, and warrior respected for his quick actions; leader of the Métis at Seven Oaks; founder of Grantown (now Saint Francois-Xavier) in Manitoba; Warden of the Plains for the Hudson’s Bay Company after it merged with the Northwest Company. Contentious relations with Métis community later.
Jerry Potts	Guide, interpreter, scout, often for the Northwest Mounted Police; frontier personality; accepted by his First Nations relatives as First Nations.

<b>Person, Invention, or Event</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Louis Riel	Leader of the Métis struggles for land and citizenship rights in what is now Manitoba and Saskatchewan. This list of Métis rights was adopted almost without change by the Canadian government as the Manitoba Act, May 1870, but not until the Métis had been defeated and driven off many of their lands in Manitoba. Métis defended the prairie lands against Fenian raids from the U.S. during the mid and late 1800s. Responsible for ensuring French was entrenched as an official accepted language of Canada (in what became Manitoba Act).
Gabriel Dumont	Military leader of the Métis, especially in Saskatchewan settlements. Sharpshooter and expert horseman; worked for a period in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West show. Established a ferry crossing of the South Saskatchewan River, called Gabriel's Crossing, now the site of the Dumont Bridge. Spoke six languages and was an accomplished guide, interpreter, and hunter.
John Norquay	Premier of Manitoba, 1878 to 1887; first Métis to serve as a premier of a Canadian province.
Amelia Douglas	Wife of B.C.'s first governor, James Douglas. Their children married into, and were a part of, the dynamic community of settlers of Victoria and B.C. Cecilia married pioneer physician J.S. Helmcken; James Douglas Jr. married the daughter of S.C. Elliot, premier of B.C. 1876-1878; Jane married Alexander Grant Dallas, Chief Factor of the west-of-the-Rockies portion of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Governor of Rupert's Land.
Josette Work	Wife of Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor John Work; their daughter Jane married physician/fur trader William Fraser Tolmie.
Jim Brady and Malcolm Norris	Métis political activists in the prairie provinces and north in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s who fought for Métis rights.
Norman Bethune	Famous doctor who worked internationally; well known in China.
Peter Lougheed	Former premier of Alberta.
Richard Cardinal	This young boy, by his unfortunate suicide in the mid 1980s while in foster care and the resulting publicity prompted significant change of the Child and Family Act of Alberta for the better. Other provinces followed suit.

<b>Person, Invention, or Event</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Douglas Cardinal	World famous Métis architect, designed the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa and pioneered the use of computers in architectural design. See: <a href="http://www.djcarchitect.com/">http://www.djcarchitect.com/</a> and also the video “The Warrior From Within.”
Brian Trottier	Hockey legend.
Maria Campbell	Métis writer, broadcaster, film producer; brought the story of the Métis to Canada with her 1973 book <i>Halfbreed</i> ; kept alive the sense of history of the Métis from the later 1800s into modern day through her memories of her family; political and community activist.

## THE MÉTIS PEOPLE OF CANADA

The Métis are one of Canada's three Aboriginal peoples, and a relatively new people in the world. The Métis were born from the fur trade and the early exploration days of what is now modern-day Canada. European men venturing to explore the land and to work the fur trade took First Nations women as their wives. The children of those first mixed marriages were the first Métis people.

The Métis as a people remained distinct from both their European and First Nations roots, borrowing a little from one culture and a little from the other to create their own unique culture and to establish a unique race. The Métis have their own language, flag, art, music and songs, national anthem, heroes, claim for a homeland, and, most importantly, a strong sense of identity and history.

Métis were once known as Métis Indians. They have also been called *Bois Brulé*, *Half-Burnt Woodmen*, *Canadiens*, *Flower-Beadwork People*, *Black Scots*, *Half Breeds*, *Breeds*, and *Country Born*. Some of the names have a distinctly racist connotation. The Métis were also called *Otipemisiwak* by their First Nations cousins; the name means “the people who have their own mind.” The Métis people have always been independent-minded, and remain so today.

The Métis language—Michif—is a blend of predominantly Cree, French, and English. Even so, words from the contributing languages are pronounced differently in Michif. There are now only a few thousand fluent native speakers across Canada, but you may still hear Michif if you visit Métis communities in such places as the St. Paul area of Alberta, the Qu'Appelle valley of Saskatchewan, or the Red River settlement of Manitoba.

Many people will know of Métis leaders Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, who helped lead the Métis in their battles with the government of Canada for rights of citizenship and land titles. Today you will find the Métis everywhere. Some modern and well-known Métis include Norman Bethune, former premier of Alberta Peter Lougheed, hockey legend Brian Trottier, and world-famous architect Douglas Cardinal.

Donna Wilford, Métis Liaison 1999-2001  
School District 68, Nanaimo-Ladysmith Mid Island Métis Nation



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<http://www.Métismuseum.ca/media/document.php/00733.pdf>

**Further Resources**

First Nations, Inuit and Métis Literatures and Cultures  
<http://compcanlit.usherbrooke.ca/links.html#Inuit>

This is an informative site with links to an extensive list of Aboriginal authors, publishers, etc.:

Borgerson, Lon and Suntep Theatre. *A Thousand Supperless Babes: The Story of the Métis*. Prince Albert, Sask.: Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI).

This multimedia theatre work, with both a book and a CD, reveals Métis history through story, song, and dance. Included in the package are the play’s script, sheet music, musical score, and a media presentation of historical images.

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