



Making History.

Our Land. Our Culture. Our Future.



Metis Settlements General Council



This book is dedicated to the Honourable Don Getty, for the contributions that he has made to the Métis Settlements of Alberta.



Alberta is celebrating its centennial year in 2005. Communities and citizens are finding unique and memorable ways to showcase their contributions to making the province what it is today – community gatherings, celebrations, school programs and exhibits are some of the activities taking place.

The Métis Settlements are also celebrating this milestone and are taking the opportunity to showcase, through the publication of this book, the contributions that the Settlements have given to making Alberta the province it is today.

Making History revived many memories for community members. The stories, pictures and statements reflected throughout the book reflect the rich, vibrant and unique nature of these distinct communities.



distinct métis communities

Alberta Métis Settlements

The eight Métis Settlements in Alberta are unique, vibrant, prospering communities. Together, they have a land base of 1.25 million acres. The communities are located throughout northern Alberta, and are home to approximately 6,500 people, one-tenth of Alberta's total Métis population.

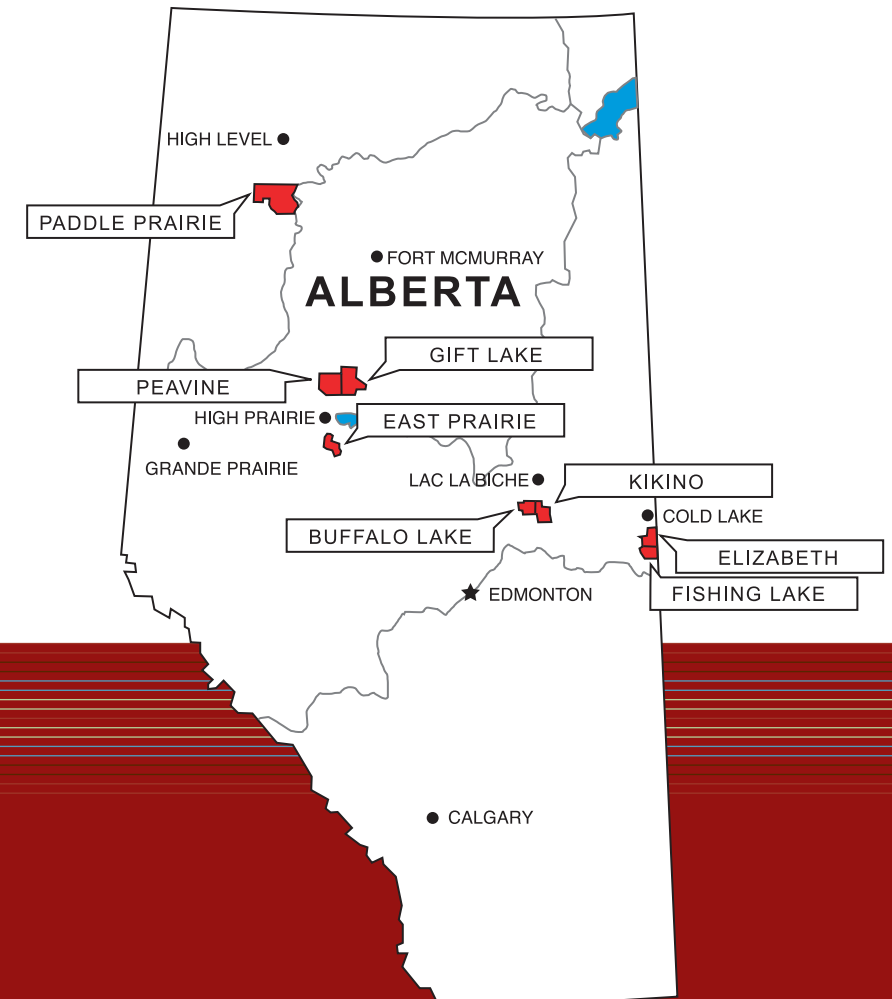
In many ways, the Métis of the Métis Settlements are similar to other Métis groups in Canada. Our customs, practices and traditions are similar to those of other Métis groups. By the same token, our culture, traditions and values are unique from others. This reality contributes to the reality that we truly are a distinct Aboriginal people in Canada.

*No matter where you go,
or how long you're gone
for, you can always
come home."*

*Settlement Member,
Paddle Prairie
September 2005*

TOTAL LAND AREA:
528,000 hectares
(1.2 million acres)

**NUMBER OF
SETTLEMENTS: 8**



The Métis Mark in the West

It is common knowledge that historically, the Métis played a crucial role in the development and success of the fur trade throughout the Canadian west. This history has been documented as early as the 18th century. Examples of Alberta Métis communities that flourished at prominent fur trade locations include Lac La Biche Mission (c. 1785), Fort Vermilion (c. 1779), and Fort Chipewyan (c.1778). In addition to these well-known communities, it is important to acknowledge that Métis families and communities were located throughout the Canadian plains. Contemporary communities throughout Alberta, such as Fishing Lake, St. Albert, Grouard, Gift Lake, and Carcajou can, in large part, attribute their existence today to the early settlement efforts of Métis families.

In addition to the fur trade, Métis presence in Alberta was also affected by events occurring outside of the province of Alberta, including Métis scrip processes in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and the 1885 Métis resistance at Batoche, Saskatchewan. These events lead to the exodus of Métis families from these areas to what is now Alberta, where they would often settle at places already having a Métis presence.

This history has played a significant role in the creation of numerous present-day Métis communities including the Alberta Métis Settlements.



1778 – 1885



1778
Fort Chipewyan, Alberta



1779
Fort Vermilion, Alberta



1785
Lac La Biche Mission, Alberta



1870
Manitoba Act-Scrip



1872
Métis Traders with Carts



1885
Métis Resistance
at Batoche, Saskatchewan



1895 – 1908

Land for the Métis: St. Paul des Métis Settlement

A number of events occurred during the 19th century that had a profound effect on the Métis way of life. The fur trade had declined to the point where the Hudson's Bay Company had closed many of its trading posts throughout the Northwest. The depletion of traditional food sources, and landlessness caused by the scrip distribution process made matters worse for the Métis. The deplorable living conditions they faced were further exacerbated by the 1885 Métis Rebellion at Batoche, which in many cases had left the Métis ostracized and alienated from the rest of Canadian society.

One of the first Roman Catholic missionaries to form a congregation in northern Alberta, Father Lacombe, was sensitive to the destitution faced by the Métis. Father Lacombe envisioned a farming community – a "colony" which, with the guidance and assistance of the Catholic Church and the government, could alleviate the problems faced by the Métis.

To survive, according to those governing the Settlement, the Métis had to assimilate. The assimilation effort at the Settlement included provision of eighty-acre farming plots to destitute Métis families where they could establish a residence and farm. Although lands were provided to Métis settlers, the necessary farming equipment and supplies were not, with the result that settlers were not able to succeed according to the standards set by the Settlement management board. At the same time, immigration of homesteaders into Alberta was being encouraged and non-Métis homesteaders began to express interest in acquiring the Settlement lands. Concluding then that the Settlement had not succeeded in its goal of assimilating the Métis settlers, and that the Settlement lands were in demand for homesteading purposes, the lease was terminated.

By 1909, St. Paul des Métis Settlement was publicly declared open to homesteading. Given that most of the original Métis settlers did not have a secure homesteading interest in the lands they had occupied, they left the area to settle elsewhere.



Father Albert Lacombe
1827 - 1916



1895
St. Paul des Métis
established as a "Métis colony"



1909
St. Paul des Métis
closed as a Métis colony
opened up for homesteading



Establishment of the Métis Settlements

Following the closure of St. Paul des Métis, many Métis families relocated to farming areas near Fishing Lake, west of the Alberta-Saskatchewan border and east of the original St. Paul des Métis Settlement site. Families moved by horse and wagon teams and on foot, leading cows and carrying all of their belongings.

During this era, homesteading was actively encouraged by the province. It became apparent to Métis settlers throughout Alberta that, similar to the experience at St. Paul des Métis, if they did not have a secure, legal interest in lands that they used and occupied, they could never have a secure land base. Without land, protection of Métis culture, lifestyle and traditions would be difficult, if not impossible.

The Métis feared what effect this would have on their distinct way of life. Their need for a secure land base and their talent to organize effectively played a key role in the establishment of the Métis settlements today. In an effort to alleviate their destitution, Métis settlers and their supporters lobbied the provincial government for provision of lands and services for Métis people.

Due in large part to the advocacy efforts of Joseph Dion, Jim Brady, Malcolm Norris and Peter Tompkins, the Métis need for a secure land base was formally expressed to the provincial government. At the first convention and organization of L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Teritoires du Nord-Ouest in St. Paul, Alberta in December 1932, this goal was expressed.

“Our first objective and the one in which we have our deepest interest the one which more than anything else called our movement into being, is to see that adequate provision is made for homeless and destitute families”...

Minutes, 1932 Convention of L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord Ouest, Dion Papers, (Glenbow Institute)

1928 – 1940



1928
Métis begin to organize politically in Alberta.



1932
L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord-Ouest is formed. Resolution to secure land for destitute Métis.



1934
Alberta establishes the Ewing Commission to investigate the condition of the “Half-breed population” of Alberta.

“The Commission is of opinion that as the Métis were the original inhabitants of these great unsettled areas and are dependent on wildlife and fish for their livelihood, they should be given the preference over non-residents in respect of fur, game and fish”

Alberta, The Ewing Commission, 1935

Representing the interests of a growing Métis population, the “big five” lobbied the Alberta government to set aside lands for Métis settlers. In response to this campaign, a provincial enquiry was ordered. The Ewing Commission travelled throughout Alberta, enquiring into the conditions faced by Métis in Alberta. The ultimate recommendation of the Commission in 1935 was the establishment of Métis settlements, lands to be set aside for the Métis.

This and other recommendations of the Commission were formally accepted by the Alberta government in 1938. Provincial legislation, provided for the establishment of Métis settlements throughout central and northern Alberta. Initially, 12 areas were established: Big Prairie, Caslan, Cold Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie, Touchwood, Marlboro, and Wolf Lake. Today, eight of these areas remain and are known as: Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie, and Peavine.



"The Big Five" Provincial Executive Committee, Métis Association of Alberta, 1935. Back Row: Left to Right: Peter Tomkins, Felix Calihoo. Front Row: Left to Right: Malcom Norris, Joseph Dion, James Brady



1936
Ewing Commission issues its report, which recommends that lands be set aside for Métis



1938
The Métis Population Betterment Act proclaimed. Orders-in-Council establish 12 Métis settlement areas throughout northern Alberta.



1940
Touchwood Métis settlement closed



1941
Marlboro Métis settlement closed



1940 - 1975

The Early Years

Following the establishment of the Settlements, Métis families began to move to the 12 areas. Their journeys were often arduous, involving travel by horse team and wagon, or riverboat, depending on the landscape. Establishing communities at the areas required hard work and determination. Settlers broke land for farming, built roads, and cut timber for construction of homes. In order to earn a livelihood, settlers often combined traditional economic activities with agriculture and local industrial work.

As the communities developed, the well-being of Métis settlers improved. Families grew, businesses developed, and the communities evolved to the point where the Métis Settlement communities felt capable, confident and motivated to exercise self-determination as Métis peoples, including self-government on their land base. Although the provincial government retained significant control over the management of the settlements, councils were elected among community members to form a local government system. To an extent, this enabled the Métis to determine how the Settlement communities would be run.

While the Settlements were developing, the province was making unilateral decisions in relation to the Settlement communities. These decisions, including closure of four of the Settlements and unilateral changes to the legislation, prompted the Settlements to unite politically and legally for the purpose of protecting their collective interests. In 1975, the Federation of Métis Settlements became the legal entity that would lead the Settlements into the future.



1956
Fathers of the Federation



1960
Wolf Lake settlement closed



1969
First Court Case filed
Poitras vs A.G. for Alberta



1974
Statement of Claim filed against province
for revenues generated from oil and gas
development on settlement lands



1975
Alberta Federation of Métis Settlement Associations
incorporated representing the eight Métis
Settlements. Federation of Métis Settlement
Associations assumes responsibility for oil and gas
revenues lawsuit



By Means of Conferences and Negotiations

After 30 years or more of development, the Settlements were at a point where they needed to increase their political power and autonomy as distinct Métis communities. In 1975, the Federation of Métis Settlements was formed as the legal entity to facilitate this process on behalf of the eight communities. As a federation, the Settlements were a strong, united voice for the Métis.

The aspirations of the Settlements as articulated by the Federation were initially not recognized by Alberta. To facilitate dialogue and resolution of the issues, a committee involving both Métis and provincial government representation was formed. The mandate of the MacEwan Commission focussed on a review of the Métis Betterment Act for the purpose of making recommendations that would allow for increased political, cultural, social and economic development on the Métis Settlements. The timing of the Commission's Report in 1984 could not have been better for the Métis Settlements. It was released at a time when Aboriginal rights were being recognized and affirmed in the Canadian Constitution. In addition, the Federation had commenced a multi-billion dollar lawsuit against the Alberta government for mismanagement of funds generated from Settlement land resource revenues. Many of the final recommendations of the MacEwan report would effectively deal with the issues implicated in the lawsuit, including self-government and protection of a Métis land base.

“The Federation is confident that by working together with the Government of Alberta in the spirit of past conferences and negotiations we can create a new Métis Settlements Act and amend The Alberta Act to entrench Métis settlement lands in the Canadian Constitution. In doing so we will demonstrate to all Canadians the ‘made in Alberta’ approach to recognizing and affirming Métis aboriginal rights.”

Letter to Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed, Federation of Métis Settlements June 1986

1975 – 1990



1979
Alberta Ombudsman reviews relations between the Federation the Settlements and the provincial government.



1979
In 1979, an historic meeting was held involving Métis Settlement Elders and leaders. These individuals, some who are identified here, reaffirmed the principles of Métis political organization, negotiation, and unity as necessary to ensure the rights of the Métis people.





“Quite simply, Mr. Premier... the Métis Settlements of Alberta identify and define their right to their land and resources, to a distinct political status, and to their own social, cultural and economic development”.

Letter to Alberta Premier Peter Lougheed, Federation of Métis Settlements June 1982

The Métis Settlements: A Made-in-Alberta Approach

In addition to discussions that were had throughout the 1980’s with the Alberta government on matters affecting Settlement lands and governance, the Métis Settlements were also active participants in national discussions around the constitutional patriation process, including the inclusion of Métis in the Constitution Act of 1982. Through the Federation, the Settlements had argued that the Indigenous “nation” of the west, the Métis, should be accorded the same recognition as had been given to other Indigenous nations of Canada. Their submissions bolstered the lobbying efforts that were being made by other Métis representatives for recognition of Métis and Aboriginal rights in Canada’s Constitution.

The Settlements have consistently taken a pragmatic, results-oriented approach to achieving the goals and aspirations of the communities. Similarly, when discussing the inclusion and recognition of Métis peoples in Canada’s constitution, the Settlements recognized the value in working collaboratively with the Provinces. Thus, notwithstanding the impasse that seemed to be preventing furtherance of Métis aspirations through the First Ministers’ Conferences at the national level, the Métis Settlements continued to work with Alberta, pursuing a unique “made-in-Alberta” approach to addressing Métis Settlement land and political interests.

The Alberta-Métis Settlements Accord: A Milestone in Métis Settlement History

The Settlements and the Province continued throughout the late 1980’s to work out the terms of a new relationship. The primary focus of the Settlements continued to be securing lands for Métis, and the opportunity to be self-governing, and self-reliant. In June 1985 the terms of this new relationship were presented as Resolution 18 in the Alberta Legislative Assembly by then-Premier Lougheed. Four years later, on July 1, 1989, the Province of Alberta and the Métis Settlements, defining the principles of their new relationship, signed the Alberta-Métis Settlements Accord.

The Accord reached between Alberta and the Settlements was concluded fifty years after the Métis Population Betterment Act provided for the establishment of the settlement areas. In many ways the Accord enabled the Métis Settlements to achieve unprecedented levels of social, economic, community and political development. The agreement secured to the Métis’ ownership in lands that they historically used and occupied. It ensured co-management of natural resources on these lands. With respect to political leadership and decision-making affecting the Métis Settlements, the new legislation provided the Settlements with the opportunity to develop a unique form of Aboriginal self-government. To facilitate the development of the Settlement communities, a comprehensive financial agreement was concluded between the parties. Together, these terms have provided a foundation for the Settlements to build viable communities.

...And Whereas the Métis people of Alberta... desire protection of a land base for themselves and for the benefit of future generations... The Legislative Assembly grant existing Métis Settlement lands to the Métis Settlement Associations, to be held on behalf of the Métis people of Alberta;

Excerpts from “A Resolution Concerning an Amendment to the Alberta Act” (Resolution 18) tabled by the Honourable Peter Lougheed, Premier before the Legislative Assembly, 3 June 1985



1982
Constitution Act, 1982 proclaimed. Section 35 and recognition of Métis as “aboriginal peoples” in Constitution Act. Section 37 – Canada commits to future meetings to discuss aboriginal rights with the aboriginal peoples. Federation publishes statement on Métis Aboriginal rights: “Métisism: a Canadian Identity”
MacEwan Commission established to review the Métis Betterment Act



1985
Premier Lougheed presents Resolution 18 to the Alberta Legislature, outlining proposed changes to the Alberta Act as recommended by the MacEwan Commission report.



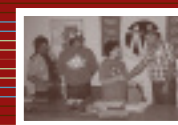
1986
Federation of Métis Settlements Association response to Resolution 18: “By Means of Conferences and Negotiations” We Ensure Our Rights.



1987
First Ministers’ Conference on Aboriginal peoples and the Constitution. Premier Lougheed maintains the “Made-in-Alberta” approach to dealing with Métis issues.



1989
Alberta-Métis Settlements Accord signed. Métis Settlements stay the Trust Fund misappropriation lawsuit in exchange for Accord package.



1990
Métis Settlements legislation is implemented.



1990 – 2005

Métis Settlements: Contemporary Métis Communities

Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement

Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement is located in east-central Alberta, near the town of Lac La Biche. The land base of Buffalo Lake is 83,793 acres and the current population on the Settlement is 972 people.

Many of the families that have settled at Buffalo Lake relocated from other areas in the region with a dominant Métis presence, including Lac La Biche Mission, North Buck Lake, and Kikino. The interconnectedness of the Métis Settlements today is made obvious by family connections between Buffalo Lake, Kikino, and East Prairie.

As with the other Métis Settlements, early development at Buffalo Lake depended on the hard work and commitment of community members. Elders recall how local men cut logs to build homes and the first community school. Similarly, the first Settlement office and community hall, Sinclair Hall, were built by Settlement members.

What started out many years ago as a class project, “Elder’s Night Out” is now an active, organized social support group of active community elders at Buffalo Lake. The group meets regularly at a local seniors centre that is owned and operated by the seniors. Their program, which includes weekly meetings, suppers, and celebrations, enhances the lives of all community members by promoting a strong community foundation, well-being and unification.

Active youth participation in Settlement life and activities is an important aspect of Buffalo Lake’s foundation. Youth take pride in their community, participating in summer work projects and sporting activities. This positive foundation has been instrumental to the numerous achievements made by Settlement members. Buffalo Lake members have gone on to make monumental achievements – as police officers, lawyers, and professional athletes.





East Prairie Métis Settlement

East Prairie Métis Settlement, with a population base of nearly 900 persons and has a land base of 79,020 acres. It is one of the three Métis Settlements situated near the town of High Prairie.

Elders of East Prairie reflect on how “things have changed” over the past 50 years. While transportation into Settlement used to be by trail, highways now make travel easier. A water treatment plant now supplies families with water, whereas years ago, it had to be hauled by hand from the river.

Traditional harvesting activities still form an integral part of Settlement life in East Prairie. Although game may not be as plentiful as it once was, many community members maintain traditional hunting practices for subsistence purposes. In addition to subsistence practices, forestry, oil and gas, construction, and transportation industries form a significant part of East Prairie’s economy. Settlement members have also become involved in game and cattle ranching. Over the years, the Settlement has been involved in various businesses, including a cattle ranch business, local store, and furniture store in the nearby town of High Prairie.

East Prairie Métis Settlement is home to the Wildland Firefighters, a professionally trained Métis fire-fighter team. Building on their traditional knowledge of living with the land, the Wildland Firefighters undergo rigorous training to protect forests, one of the most important resources to Aboriginal communities. Only a few years ago, the Wildland Firefighters proudly announced that Jessica Big Charles, of the East Prairie Métis Settlement, was the first female to achieve certification in Alberta as a Wildland firefighter.

Community members from East Prairie have also made significant achievements in professional sports. Over the years, two young men from this community have participated in professional-level hockey, playing for American junior hockey teams.



Debbie Houle



Elizabeth Métis Settlement

Located 30 kilometres south of the city of Cold Lake is the Elizabeth Métis Settlement. Elizabeth has experienced significant resident population growth over the past few years, growing from a base of 544 in 1998 to nearly 800 in 2005.

The local economy at Elizabeth is diverse – as with many of the other Métis Settlements, Elizabeth has substantial oil and gas activity, providing many members with work in the oilfield industry. The forest industry and construction also provides Settlement members with seasonal employment.

Elizabeth Settlement provides a variety of services to its Community members. Community facilities and services include the Settlement Office, a grade school and post-secondary educational programming. A Youth Centre offers programs for youth and families. An Aboriginal Head Start Program promotes Aboriginal culture and language, education, health, nutrition, counseling and parental involvement. Community health services work in partnership with Region 10 to provide local health care services and assistance to Elders with home care.

Similar to the other Settlements, Elizabeth’s Public Works department provides necessary services to the community. Public Works is responsible for housing and road maintenance on the Settlement. The Fire Department provides fire protection services for Settlement homes and lands.

Elizabeth is also “home” to Métis performer, Debbie Houle. Debbie has been singing since the age of five. She studied voice before embarking on a professional singing career with Asani, a contemporary a cappella Aboriginal women's trio. Debbie’s contributions to Asani as lead vocalist, harmonizing, and playing drum and rattle are astounding. The group has performed and is renowned nationally and internationally in such places as Ottawa, South Africa, Finland and the United States.





Fishing Lake Métis Settlement

Fishing Lake Métis Settlement, a Métis community of 675 persons, occupies a land base of 204,381 acres. The Settlement shares a border with the Elizabeth Métis Settlement, near the Alberta-Saskatchewan border, and is situated between two large lakes – Fishing Lake and Frog Lake.

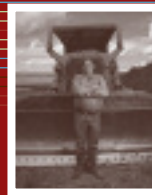
Fishing Lake is important to Métis history in western Canada, including the Métis Settlements. Oral history of the community tells how Métis leader Louis Riel and his supporters camped at Fishing Lake during the 1885 Métis Resistance at Batoche, Saskatchewan. Many of the ancestors of families at Fishing Lake made their homes in this area prior to the formal establishment of the Settlements and were connected to the St. Paul des Métis Settlement. It was at this community that Métis settlers first began to organize for the primary purpose of securing land for future generations.

In the early years, the main means of livelihood was trapping and fishing, and gathering resources from the land. Today, members are employed in a variety of ways – farming, entrepreneurs, administration, oil and gas. Many live outside of the Settlement community, although they maintain strong family and cultural connections to the Settlement.

Fishing Lake Métis Settlement has numerous amenities for its members. Community facilities and services include the Settlement Administration Office, a beautiful seniors residence, and J.F. Dion school named after

J.F. Dion who was instrumental in the establishment of the Métis Settlement. A large community hall is available to community members for large social functions and gatherings.

Fishing Lake is proud of the achievements of its members, many whom have earned a world-wide reputation for their unique talents and skills. Most prominent of those achievers is Sheldon Souray, defenseman for the Montreal Canadiens. Souray has worked extremely hard to achieve his lifelong goal of playing professional hockey. His talent and skill has been recognized internationally. As a professional hockey player who grew up on the Métis Settlements, Souray is a true Aboriginal role model for the generations of young people committed to hockey.



Sheldon Souray





Gift Lake Métis Settlement

Gift Lake Métis Settlement is a Métis community of 1 153 resident members. The Settlement has a land base of 204,381 acres and shares a boundary with Peavine Métis Settlement.

Prior to the formal establishment of the Métis Settlements in 1938, a Métis community existed at Gift Lake. The lake was said to be a special gathering place by the Aboriginal people of the area, who would gather at the existing community site for trade and exchange of gifts.

As one of the eight contemporary Métis Settlement communities, Gift Lake continues to be a special place for its community members. Local facilities and services include the Settlement Office, public health services, grade school and post-secondary educational facilities. The community also has a recreational facility and hall, which are used for large social functions and gatherings.

Gift Lake Métis Settlement is a progressive community with a strong focus on ensuring ongoing economic viability and community development. Settlement members own and operate numerous successful businesses. Farming, road construction, oil and gas, forestry, and retail and hospitality provide a diverse range of employment and economic development opportunities for Gift Lake members. The Settlement owns and operates numerous businesses, at Gift Lake and in neighbouring communities.



Kikino Métis Settlement

The land base at Kikino Métis Settlement, a Métis community of over 1000 resident members, is comprised of 107,635 hectares. The Settlement is situated in north-eastern Alberta where it shares a boundary with Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement.

While the local economy at Kikino is diverse, as with the other seven Settlements, it is grounded in the land and the ability to live off the land and its resources. Kikino has benefited from successful oil and gas exploration and development, as well as forestry resources. Today, the local economy emphasizes construction, and ranching.

Kikino is home to a number of exceptional musicians and performers that have truly made a mark in Métis history. This Settlement is home to the renowned Kikino Northern Lights Dancers, a youth dance group known locally and nationally for their astounding talent in traditional Métis dance. The dance group was started in 1978, by a group of Kikino Métis Elders who identified a need to teach their young people Métis traditional dance and music. By teaching the youth these traditions and others, Métis culture and values are maintained for future generations. Today, the Kikino Northern Lights Dancers are some of the finest Métis dancers and jiggers in Canada.

The vocal talent of another Kikino member, Priscilla Morin has been recognized nationally by the Canadian music industry. In 2000, Morin, a member of the Kikino Métis Settlement, received the award for Best Country Album at the Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards. Throughout her music career, Priscilla has toured western Canada, performing in festivals, concerts and community events. Her phenomenal voice and dedication to her music has gained her national and international recognition in the music industry.



Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement

The most northerly of the Métis Settlements is Paddle Prairie. It has a land base of 410,363 acres and is the largest of the eight Settlements. While many of its members reside off-settlement, the current resident population base of Paddle Prairie is 789.

Paddle Prairie boasts rich agricultural lands, numerous rivers and creeks, abundant forests, and substantial oil and gas reserves. This diversity provides Métis settlers with a broad range of livelihood opportunities such as farm and ranch operations, oil and gas exploration and development, and construction. Métis settlers also actively participate in traditional subsistence activities, including hunting, fishing and gathering resources provided by the land and waterways.

Paddle Prairie has celebrated many achievements. Its community members are renowned locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally for their exceptional skills and talents in sports, craftsmanship, entrepreneurship, music and leadership.

Community spirit has been instrumental in shaping Paddle Prairie. Members reflect on how, in years past, there were no local sporting facilities. In order that children would be able to participate in sports like hockey and rodeo, families supported each other by driving young athletes to events throughout the province.

The isolated location of Paddle Prairie has contributed to its reputation as an independent and spirited community. Over time, families have become known for their unique talents and skills, including hunting and fishing, animal husbandry, farming, carpentry, sewing and crafts, athletics and musical talent. Continued inter-generational transmittal of these skills and knowledge ensures the survival of the community.



Peavine Métis Settlement

Peavine Métis Settlement has a land base of 213,117 acres and a resident population base of 923 members. The Settlement shares a boundary with Gift Lake Métis Settlement. The local economy at Peavine Métis Settlement has traditionally been supported by oil and gas exploration and development, construction, and forestry. A number of settlers also practice agriculture and logging as a means of earning a livelihood. Investments in resource development continue to provide the community with economic development opportunities and local employment. More recently, the Settlement has expanded its economic investments into other sectors, including tourism and hospitality.

In the early 1920s, settlers began arriving and establishing homesteads in the area that is now Peavine Métis Settlements. Early settlers recall how, historically, they travelled to nearby communities to encourage other Métis families to settle at Peavine once the area had been set aside specifically for Métis settlement. These extraordinary efforts were made to ensure that the Settlement's boundaries were not altered by the province, as had occurred at Wolf Lake and Touchwood. As a result of these efforts, many new families moved to Peavine during the years 1950-52.

Over time, Métis settlers at Peavine have maintained a traditional lifestyle of hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering. Many still rely on a traditional diet of moose, duck and fish. Berry picking is also a valued cultural practice at Peavine, as is meat drying, fish smoking and hide tanning. Community elders have insisted on maintaining these practices so that the traditions are passed on from one generation to the next.

As with many of the other Métis Settlements, Peavine has made significant contributions to Canadian professional sports. Their Settlement has participated in professional baseball for six decades with the Peavine Rangers winning championship titles nationally numerous times.



métis settlements affiliates



Serving Our Communities

The unique institutions of the Métis Settlements, including the General Council, the Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal, the Métis Settlements Land Registry, the Métis Settlements Ombudsman, and the Métis Settlements Child and Family Services Authority (Region 10) are the modern building blocks of Canada's only legislated and recognized land-based Métis government.

Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal

The Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal was established in 1990 when the Métis Settlements Act was passed. Designed to provide practical and unbiased solutions to some of the day-to-day disputes facing the Settlements, the Tribunal has jurisdiction to hear disputes concerning membership and land allocation decisions made by Settlement Councils. It also has jurisdiction over various areas identified in the Policies of the Métis Settlements General Council, including timber, financial interests, and descent of property. Another significant role of the Tribunal is to administer and resolve disputes about access to and compensation for use of Settlement land. The Tribunal can hear disputes referred to it by provincial legislation, General Council Policies, or Settlement bylaws, or if all parties agree to have the Tribunal settle the matter.

The mission of the Tribunal is to contribute to the self-sufficiency of Métis life by providing resolution of issues affecting the progress of the Métis Settlements and individuals. In providing this assistance, the Tribunal strives to ensure justice is dispensed using principles of law as a tool.

To the best of its ability, the Tribunal seeks to settle disputes in an effective and timely manner, with the least possible disruption of Métis





life and relationships. Settlement Councils and members are informed of the Tribunal's role, so appropriate issues can be brought forward in a timely manner.

Métis Settlements Land Registry

The 1990 Accord provided for the establishment of the Métis Settlements Land Registry. The mandate of the Land Registry is to register land interests and to maintain and administer the Settlement Members List for all eight Settlements.

The Métis Settlements General Council holds title to Settlement lands by way of Letters Patent. This interest includes the roads, road allowances, and the beds and shores of water bodies and watercourses located within the Settlement boundaries. The Land Registry records and registers all land interests and land transactions relating to the eight Métis Settlements in a manner legally equivalent to the Alberta Land Titles Office.

The Land Registry is also responsible for maintaining a comprehensive Métis Settlements Members List in accordance with the Métis Settlements Act. A person can become a member of a Métis Settlement if their application is approved by one of the eight Settlement Councils pursuant to the Métis Settlements Act.

The Registrar makes virtually all decisions of the Land Registry with respect to land or membership. The independent and separate nature of this office is attributable to the legal component of the Registry, which creates, transfers and terminates legal property rights. The only review processes for Land Registry decisions and actions are through the Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal and the Courts.

Métis Settlements Land Registry Staff, 2005



Métis Settlements Ombudsman

The Office of the Métis Settlements Ombudsman was created in 2003 to provide an independent and impartial place to take complaints about Settlements' management or leadership. It also exists to identify unfair or unjust complaints made against the Councils and staff. The mission of the Métis Settlements Ombudsman is to promote the rights and responsibilities of Métis Settlement Councils, staff, entities and members, through inspection, investigations and recommendations. The role is to be remedial or corrective rather than punitive and disciplinary.

The authority of the Métis Settlements Ombudsman is derived from ministerial delegation. Settlement members who believe that an error or injustice has occurred in their dealings with Métis Settlement Councils, staff, or Council entities can bring a complaint to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's office may conduct investigations into the matter and make recommendations for resolution of the problem at hand.

Métis Settlements: Strategic Training Initiatives Society

On April 1, 1996, responsibility for designing and delivering programs to support Aboriginal employment and training was taken over by Aboriginal organizations across Canada. This transfer of responsibility was part of a 15-year process, which saw the gradual shift of authority from the federal government to Aboriginal people at the national, regional, and community levels. The authority to design and deliver programs for Métis Settlement members was devolved to the Métis Settlements General Council as representing the interests of the eight Métis Settlements in Alberta.

Under the direction of the Métis Settlements General Council, the Strategic Training Initiatives Society (STI) was formed to provide



Métis Settlements Ombudsman Staff, 2005





“Movements and great causes can only advance when they produce leaders of integrity... Teaching... the value of education and struggle, our programs must always be in close touch with the everyday life of our people...”

Jim Brady, Métis Leader (1940)

training and education to Métis Settlement members. STI works with the Settlements to empower young Métis people by providing opportunities for members to receive training that will help them to realize their potential – and their dreams.

STI sponsors individuals as well as group training projects. For example, the Fishing Lake Settlement Youth Trades Initiative undertook major renovations of the administration building at Fishing Lake Métis Settlement as part of a training project. Financial partnerships from within the community allowed local youth to participate in a team project, while providing opportunities for them to apply the trade skills they had acquired through STI-sponsored training.

Individual sponsorships have enabled Métis Settlement members to acquire certification in a number of trades and professions, including education, business, heavy equipment technician, emergency medical technician, welding, and journalism.

Region 10: Métis Settlements Child and Family Services Authority

There are 10 Child and Family Services Authorities in Alberta. Each is led by a community board whose members are chosen from the community and appointed by the Minister of Children’s Services. The Métis Settlements are proud to acknowledge Lillian Parenteau of Fishing Lake Métis Settlement as Alberta’s only Aboriginal Chief Executive Officer of a Child and Family Services Authority.

Region 10 is the Métis Settlements Child and Family Services Authority. The Authority serves the eight Métis settlements in Alberta and has an eight-member governance board made up of representatives from each of the Settlements.

The head office is located in Edmonton with two regional offices located in High Prairie and St. Paul. In two settlements, partnership collaboration has resulted in the construction of family centers with two others to begin in the near future. The long term goal is to have an family center in each settlement for families to access a variety of integrated services offered by the provincial government, local service providers and other partners.

The Authority employs approximately twenty-five staff. To the extent possible, every effort is made to recruit and retain staff from the Métis Settlements and to a limited degree, opportunity provided for work experience.

A recent initiative undertaken with the Edmonton and Area Child and Family Services Authority to repatriate children in care in Edmonton to their families and home communities has resulted in front line service being provided out of the Edmonton office. In fact, this initiative is growing so rapidly and is showing such good results for our children and families, other Authorities are interested in similar arrangements.

Since it's inception in 1999, the Métis Settlements Child and Family Services Authority, Region 10, has 'plowed new ground'. It is not only the only aboriginal Authority in the province but it also has the highest investment in community prevention/intervention supports contracted with each settlement. It consistently leads the province in children being placed with family when they come into care. The service model used respects the values and family practices of the Métis people on Settlements. On different levels, it has formed collaborative partnerships that have resulted in new or enhanced services for children and families.

The Authority provides the following :

- legislated child protection and family enhancement services;
- legislated family services for children with disabilities;
- child care subsidies and kin childcare funding;
- prevention of family violence and bullying supports;
- early intervention, fasd, home visitation and early childhood development resources to each settlement;
- coaching/mentorship support to settlement service providers;
- facilitates the development of regional/provincial partnerships and encourages delivery of services within each settlement.



métis settlements general council



Our Land, Our Culture, Our Future

Together, the eight Métis Settlements form the Métis Settlements General Council, a unique Aboriginal government governing the only Métis in the country who have a collectively-owned land base. As an Aboriginal government, the General Council has a unique political relationship with governments: provincially, it is the sole political representative of the Settlements; nationally, it is the sole political representative of the Settlements. A four-member executive, elected by the general assembly plays a significant role in the management and maintenance of the government-to-government relationships with the Provincial and Federal Government.

As the central government for the Métis Settlements, the General Council has a broad mandate that includes law making, land stewardship, resource management, financial management, and community development. Law-making authority extends over membership, hunting, fishing, trapping, timber and other matters relating to the Settlement lands and people. These laws are binding on every Settlement, and are equal in status to other provincial laws.

The Métis Settlements General Council also performs administrative functions, and is responsible to develop, implement, and distribute programs and services to the Settlement communities. These include education and training initiatives, economic development, social services, and resource development and management.

The shared vision of the Métis Settlements General Council is a governance system that respects the traditional values of the Métis way of life; which, through trust and teamwork, builds on the collective dreams of past, present, and future Métis leaders. It is based on three guiding principles: Our Land, Our Culture, and Our Future.

The most important thing about the settlements is that they gave the Métis people a land base. No matter where they go now, they always have a home to go back to.”

*Late Robert Aulotte Elder,
Fishing Lake 1979,
Jasper, Alberta*





Our Land: Collectively Protected it is the Foundation of Our Existence as Unique Métis Communities

Elder Aulotte's 1979 reflection is echoed by Settlement members today, illustrating how truly integral the land is to Métis identity and lifestyle.

Our Settlement lands are diverse – rich farmlands, abundant rivers and lakes, and wooded forests provide our families and communities with valuable resources from which they can maintain homes and practice their cultural traditions. In addition to enabling the exercise and protection of traditional lifestyles, the system of landholding on the Settlements provide us with control over the exploration and development of minerals occurring on Settlement lands – a truly unique way of landholding.



Our Culture: Preserved and Promoted, Provides Harmonious Communities

Our Métis culture is rich, vibrant and exciting, deeply rooted in the traditional lifestyles of our people. It is tied closely to the land and the ability to spend time on the land, exercising customs, practices and traditions. These traditional practices include hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering resources provided by the land.

Métis traditional knowledge and values, and the role of elders, have historically ensured the survival of our people. Knowledge passed on from one generation to another has enabled our people to understand and live in the environment, and to make adjustments necessary with changes over time.

Our culture also includes unique Métis dances, music, and story telling, performing and visual arts. Within all of these areas, Métis artists and performers have ensured the preservation and evolution of our creative Métis heritage, while bringing a wider awareness of our culture to others.

Our Future: Planned and Inspired for Our Children and Future Generations

The strength of our Settlements is not only in our land, our culture, and our future. Our true strength is in our people. As Métis, we are known for our dynamic skills, our resilience, and our creativity. Our Métis heritage is built on these outstanding and innovative skills and practices, traditional knowledge, enduring spirit and motivation. Historically, our ancestors were the interpreters, guides, and voyageurs whose presence and participation in the west was integral to making Canada the country it is today. As our ancestors did two centuries ago, we, as Métis, make history today.



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Carol Carifelle-Brzezicki

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