

Who we are

The Red River Métis, also known as the Manitoba Métis, are a distinct Indigenous People in west-central North America, with our own collective identity, language, culture way of life and government, located in the heart of the Homeland. Our Homeland includes the Great Plains in what is now Western Canada, and the northern United States of America.

The Manitoba Métis Federation is the democratically-elected government of the Red River Métis —Canada's Negotiating Partners in Confederation and the Founders of the Province of Manitoba.

Our distinct Red River Métis cultural heritage is well known to Canadians: The Red River Jig; the Red River Cart, the poems, songs and music of our artists, our language Michif and our Red River Beadwork, so renowned that we were given the name "the Flower Beadwork People" by our Cree relatives. Our political history includes our national infinity flag and the struggles of our ancestors as they fought for our rights in battle and in the courts.

Through what is called the Red River Resistance — a major event in Canadian history — the Red River Métis formed a democratically elected government to prevent Canada from taking control of the Red River Settlement without consultation with the Red River Métis, who were the majority population. In 1870, we successfully negotiated our entry in the Canada's confederation and became known as the Manitoba Métis, after the newly created province. We remain the only Indigenous people to bring a province into Confederation.

At times called half-breeds, mixed blood, country born, Bois-Brûlés, Lii Michif and eventually Otipemisiwak — the people who own themselves — we are the Red River Métis.



Our historic journey with the Catholic Church

Together, we — the Church and the Red River Métis— have faced trials and tribulations. We often relied upon each other, as helpers, servants, and partners. It has always been, and remains today, a journey of faith and hope, as we have walked side-by-side.


The Catholic Church has watched over and walked alongside this Red River Métis flock — la nouvelle nation — for over 200 years. Many shepherds of God played roles of significance during our struggles to defend our families. Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché, Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin, Father Joseph-Noël Ritchot and many others.

Bishop Joseph-Octave Plessis introduced the Church into the Red River Territory, at the behest of an 1817 petition from the settlement to the Bishop, stating “with the ministry of a Catholic Priest nothing will be missing [. . .]” and therefore asking for the help of a priest of their holy religion. The Church was a desired and welcomed part of Red River Métis life.

Since our inception and through to today, at the beginning of meetings and assemblies the Red River Métis ask an Elder to give a traditional prayer. The Lord is never forgotten.

St-Joseph, the Protector of the Church, is also to our people our Patron Saint of the Red River Métis. Sadly, a Métis village in our Homeland, on the United States side of the border near Pembina, which once was his namesake, has been renamed to Walhalla, and is nearly forgotten. But today, our Elders remain faithful as many continue to mark St-Joseph's feast day.

At the end of the Red River Resistance, in November of 1885, Louis Riel was executed by judicially sanctioned murder — the dagger of the assassin was hidden in the cloak of the judge. Just prior to his death, he wrote a letter to Father Ritchot explaining “[...] walking in the footsteps of a man such as you Father, I tried to base my conduct on the one hand on what I am asked to do for others and on the other on what I am obliged in conscience to do for them.”



According to reports at the time, in his final hours Louis Riel was accompanied by his confessor Father André as well as Father Mc Williams. Newspaper accounts state that Riel's time was "devoted assiduously to prayer." Father André, once questioned, stated that Riel "was a fervent Catholic, attending the church and attending to his religious duties frequently." He also agreed that the half-breeds [Métis] were "a people highly religious" and "religion has a great influence on them."

Louis Riel's body was brought home to the Red River. The day before his burial, handbills were distributed calling for a "War of the Races" and calling for the "truly loyal" to proceed to St. Boniface and to "pull down the [St-Boniface Catholic] Cathedral down upon the heads of the Tribe that exalt the REBEL, and so blot them from the face of the Earth."

Ever since Louis Riel's death, each and every year on November 16th despite the threats and condemnation of Riel and his people as traitors, the Red River Métis continue to attend Mass in St-Boniface Cathedral and to gather in solemn ceremony at his gravesite to remember the man and commemorate his life and achievements.

After more than two centuries of being the object of violence and oppression by the State and others, Louis Riel's people are still here and finally securing our place in Canada's confederation. It has been our faith in the Creator that has kept us strong.