

# Red River Métis and the Catholic Church: ***Journey Forward – Reconciliation to Renewal***

## Building a Relationship

### Battle of Seven Oaks

The Battle of Seven Oaks was one of the earliest instances where the Red River Métis proclaimed ourselves *la nouvelle nation* – the new nation – with rights to live and trade as we wished and to travel freely in our Homeland.

1816

1817

### A Petition

Sent to Bishop Plessis, requesting a ministry for the Red River Métis, making clear that the Catholic Church was both needed and welcomed in our Homeland.

1818

### First Catholic Mission

Established by Roman Catholic Fathers Joseph-Norbert Provencher and Severe Joseph-Nicolas Dumoulin

1821

### Community at Pembina

An early and prominent centre for the Red River Métis.

1823

### First Formal Girls' School

As Bishop, Joseph-Norbert Provencher engaged Métis women Angelique and Marguerite Nolin to teach at the first formal girls' school in the Red River Settlement.

1853



### Missionaries and Priests on Hunts with Red River Métis

Father and later Bishop Louis-François Lafleche, a missionary to the Red River Settlement, travelled with the buffalo hunting expeditions from St-François Xavier.



### Bishop Taché and Louis Riel

Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché became a central figure in the events of the Red River Resistance, as an intermediary between Canada led by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald and the Red River Métis Provisional Government led by Louis Riel.



### The Red River Resistance and the Manitoba Act

The Red River Resistance arose when Canada attempted to unilaterally bring our Homeland into Canada without consultation and our consent.

Receiving Royal Assent on May 12, 1870, the *Manitoba Act* marked the legal resolution of the fight for self-determination between the federal government and the Métis people of the Red River Colony.

The Métis are the only Indigenous people to create a province.

1870

### Father Noël-Joseph Ritchot

Father Ritchot helped ensure that French language rights and Catholic religious freedoms were included in the *Manitoba Act*, and was instrumental in the inclusion of a section promising 1.4 million acres of land for the children of Red River Métis families.



### St. Boniface Diocese

Elevated September 22, 1871, and occupying an immense 38,200 square kilometers, the St. Boniface Archdiocese was at one time the largest Diocese on earth. It extended from the US border to the south, the Rocky Mountains to the west and the Arctic to the north.



Image from www.historicplaces.ca

### La Chapelle de Notre-Dame-du-Bons-Secours

Father Ritchot built a small open-air chapel in the Catholic Parish of St. Norbert containing a statue of Mary, who holds the scales of justice. On these scales, the cause of the Red River Métis outweighs that of Canada.

1871

1875

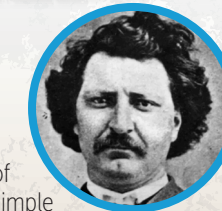


### Father André

In his final hours Louis Riel was accompanied by his confessor, Father André, who later stated that Riel "was a fervent Catholic, attending church and attending to his religious duties frequently."

### Louis Riel

Louis Riel spoke in his final statement of the heartfelt compassion of the Fathers – often in simple acts: "...the Reverend Father André has often had the kindness to feed my family with a sack of flour..."



1885

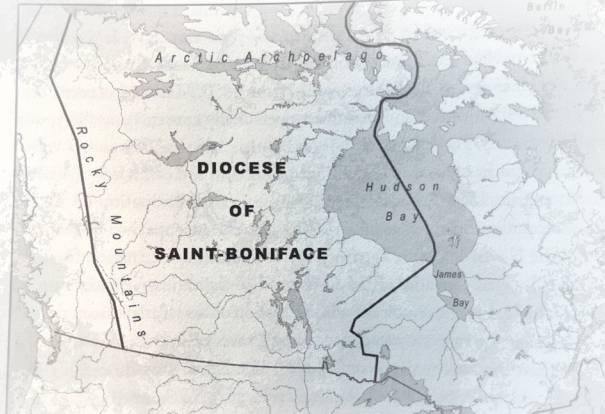
1984



More than two-thirds of Métis are Christians, and their **strongest connection is to Catholicism**

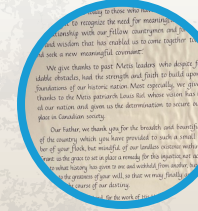
More than **40%** of Métis in Prairie provinces are Catholic

Source: 2011 National Household Survey



### A Papal blessing

Pope John Paul II met with leaders of the Métis Nation and blessed the Prayer that would be read into the record of the 1986 Constitutional Rights Conference between Canada's Prime Minister, provincial Premiers and Indigenous leaders. He would subsequently have a special meeting with the Métis and other Indigenous peoples in Canada.



## Renewing the Relationship



### Pope Francis Angelus Message

Pope Francis emphasized the importance of "walking side by side in dialogue and in mutual respect in the recognition of the rights and cultural values of all the sons and daughters of Canada".

2021



### Self-Government Recognition Agreement

Red River Métis Sign *Manitoba Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement* with Canada, recognizing the Manitoba Métis Federation as the National Government of the Red River Métis – beyond borders.



**634** Catholic Schools delivering quality education

Source: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops



**835**

Parishes and Missions serving communities



### A Papal Apology

Pope Francis apologizes to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada for harms caused: "For the deplorable conduct of these members of the Catholic Church, I ask for God's forgiveness and I want to say to you with all my heart, I am very sorry. And I join my brothers, the Canadian bishops, in asking your pardon."

2022



### Revitalizing our Historic Relationship

We are taking critical steps toward true reconciliation and renewal of our historic relationship with the Catholic Church through our faith-based pilgrimage to meet with His Holiness, followed by sharing our experiences with the Red River Métis when we return to our Homeland.



### Prayer of the Red River Métis

Our Heavenly Father, we give thanks to you for the formation of your Red River Métis people and for guiding us as we developed our ways, our culture, our language, and our communities.

We give thanks to you Lord for providing your Red River Métis people with the strength to protect our culture and community and for your guidance from among your priesthood to ensure that we protected our religion, language, and land rights in the Manitoba Act.

We give thanks to you Lord for giving your Red River Métis people the hope and courage to protect our very existence and identity in the long dark days that followed our loss on the Plains at Batoche - our resilience continues to this day as we journey forward.

We give thanks to you Lord for guiding your Red River Métis people on our journey of self-determination and self-government and for giving our past, present, and future leaders the strength and vision to work for the betterment and growth of God's people, Louis Riel's little Métis Nation.

We give thanks to you Lord for the ongoing enlightenment in our faith in you, the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Bible, so that we can not only move toward reconciliation and forgiveness for past wrongs done to our people, but that we can embrace the revitalization and renewal of our relationship with the Holy Father and the Catholic Church.

We give heartfelt thanks to you Lord for your presence in our thoughts and minds, for the wisdom and knowledge of our Elders, our Red River Métis President and Cabinet, and our Youth as future leaders, as we move forward in the years to come.

Amen.



**JOURNEY FORWARD**  
RECONCILIATION  
TO RENEWAL