

The Métis:

Transforming the Red River Valley and the Twin Cities

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES	GRADES
<p>This lesson introduces students to the Métis people who were important early settlers in the Lake Winnipeg Drainage Watershed. Students will investigate the identity of the Métis, their settlements in the Red River Valley, and the importance of their Red River Carts to the wealth and growth of the Twin Cities. The teacher may select to complete some activities or the entire lesson. These brief activities will help students understand the important role of the Métis to the foundation and development of Manitoba and Minnesota.</p> <p><i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify characteristics of the Métis people • Make a prediction • Read maps to identify details and make inferences • Summarize information • Explain how Red River trade encouraged the early wealth and growth of the Twin Cities • Make generalizations about past and present Métis populations 	<p>4th, 6th & 8th</p>
TIME	
1-2 classes	
REQUIRED MATERIALS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Computer projector ✓ Computer Internet access for students (optional) ✓ Colored pencils (optional) ✓ MAGE Podcast: “Red River Oxen Carts and Trails” ✓ Maps: “Lake Winnipeg Watershed”; Red River Cart Trails (shown in <u>Northern Lights</u>), “Métis Population Distribution”; “Total Aboriginal Identity Population”; “Métis Homeland” ✓ Handouts: “Métis Flag”; “Why did the Métis Use Red River Carts & Why did They Trade with St. Paul?”; “Métis and Their Red River Contribution”; “Métis Settlement”; “Métis Settlement Key”; “The Métis Today” 	

MINNESOTA SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS & BENCHMARKS

4th Grade

Standard 1. People use geographic representations and geospatial technologies to acquire, process and report information within a spatial context.

4.3.1.1.1 Create and use various kinds of maps, including overlaying thematic maps, of places in the United States, and also Canada or Mexico; incorporate the “TODALS” map basics, as well as points, lines and colored areas to display spatial information.

Standard 2. Geographic inquiry is a process in which people ask geographic questions and gather, organize and analyze information to solve problems and plan for the future.

4.3.1.2.1 Choose the most appropriate data from maps, charts, and graphs in an atlas to answer specific questions about geographic issues in the United States, and also Canada or Mexico.

Standard 3. Places have physical characteristics (such as climate, topography vegetation) and human characteristics (such as culture, population, political and economic systems).

4.3.2.3.1 Locate and identify the physical and human characteristics of places in the United States, and also

Canada or Mexico.

6th Grade

Standard 1. People use geographic representations and geospatial technologies to acquire, process and report information within a spatial context.

6.3.1.1.1 Create and use various kinds of maps, including overlaying thematic maps, of places in Minnesota; incorporate the “TODALSS” map basics, as well as points, lines and colored areas to display spatial information.

Standard 6. Geographic factors influence the distribution, functions, growth and patterns of cities and other human settlements.

6.3.3.6.1 Locate, identify and describe major physical features in Minnesota; explain how physical features and the location of resources affect settlement patterns and the growth of cities in different parts of Minnesota.

Standard 16. Rivalries among European nations and their search for new opportunities fueled expanding global trade networks and, in North America, colonization and settlement and the exploitation of indigenous peoples and lands; colonial development evoked varied responses by indigenous nations, and produced regional societies and economies that included imported slave labor and distinct forms of local government. (Colonization and Settlement: 1585-1763)

6.4.4.16.1 Describe European exploration, competition and trade in the upper Mississippi River region; describe varied interactions between Minnesota’s indigenous peoples and Europeans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. (Colonization and Settlement: 1585-1763)

8th Grade

Standard 1. People use geographic representations and geospatial technologies to acquire, process and report information within a spatial context.

8.3.1.1.2 Create and use various kinds of maps, including overlaying thematic maps, of places in the world; incorporate the “TODALSS” map basics, as well as points, lines and colored areas to display spatial information.

Standard 6. Geographic factors influence the distribution, functions, growth and patterns of cities and human settlements.

8.3.3.6.1 Describe how the physical and environmental features of the United States and Canada affect human activity and settlement.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

Suggested Procedure:

1. Students will be introduced to the Métis through a brief activity. The teacher will explain that the Métis people live primarily in Canada and are mainly the descendants of voyageurs who married Native Americans. They have their own culture and identity and, although their land has no borders, they have their own flag to represent their people and nation. Place students in small groups to learn about the Métis people by reviewing a list of facts and predicting the nation’s flag using the handout, “Métis Flag”. The teacher may provide additional details such as the flag has existed since 1814 and represents the uniting of 2 groups—Europeans and Native Americans.

The actual flag is an infinity symbol showing the joining of two distinct cultures for a single people forever. It is a white infinity symbol on a blue background.

French long lots are narrow, rectangular-shaped farms with a short side abutting a river. Thus, all farmers would have access to the waterways necessary for farming and transportation as well as land to grow crops.

The Métis are recognized as one of 3 Aboriginal Groups (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) in the 1982 Constitution of Canada.

2. Students will learn about the importance of the Red River trails to the growth and wealth of the Twin Cities by watching a podcast, reading paragraphs, and using maps. Students will begin by watching the podcast, “Red River Oxen Carts and Trails” (12:10) with historical and contemporary pictures. [Note: There is a “Listening Worksheet” and a “Map Worksheet” incorporated in the podcast if the teacher desires to use them.]

Next, students will examine the map, “Native Populations, Economies and Movement, ca 1820” at Historical Atlas of Canada <http://www.historicalatlas.ca/website/hacolp/contents.htm>. Click to enlarge the map and then click “Trading Posts”. Examine the map to identify the locations of Hudson Bay’s Company trading posts and Northwest Company trading posts. What pattern of their locations can you identify? Can you identify the major trading posts at Pembina, Winnipeg, and Selkirk? Identify the Mendota/St. Paul trading post. Identify the 2 groups of Native Americans by their linguistic family. How are these two groups known today?

Students will read paragraphs on the handout, “Why did the Métis Use Red River Carts & Why did They Trade with St. Paul?” and study a map of the Red River Trails. Students will be able to explain how Red River trade encouraged the early wealth and growth of the Twin Cities by completing the handout, “Métis and Their Red River Contribution”.

3. Students will answer questions about Métis settlement in the Red River Valley by examining the Lake Winnipeg Watershed map and using the handout, “Métis Settlement”. Next, students will learn about the Métis population during early settlement and today using the handout, “The Métis Today”. Students will also examine population maps to identify current Métis locations. Students will answer questions after studying and comparing the population maps:

- a. What generalizations can you make about the Métis population before 1850?
- b. Examine the population maps and explain the distribution of Métis in Canada today.
- c. Evaluate the Métis Homeland map. Is this a valid map of Métis homeland?
- d. What conclusions can you reach about the Métis population?
- e. How does the Métis population compare with other Aboriginal groups?
- f. Should Métis be labeled one of three Aboriginal groups in Canada?
- g. Should the Métis continue to be identified as a separate group of people?

Extensions

1. Students investigate further the Red River carts, the flag and its symbol, and other topics by going to one of the resources listed at Additional Website Resources.
2. Students learn about the Métis and their hero, Louis Riel, by accessing one of the lessons listed at Additional Website Resources.
3. Students can make a rainbow sample of Métis finger weaving, a friendship bracelet, or an entire Métis sash. The teacher should prepare for this activity by reading the valuable explanation, “Métis Finger Weaving”, at http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/batoche/docs/proof_en_metis_finger_weaving.pdf before watching one of many videos available on finger weaving.

4. Investigate Métis culture and history further using one of the lesson plan websites listed under Additional Websites. Students can work with a partner to make an infographic or similar online poster highlighting the role and importance of the Métis and Red River Trail.
5. Review the lyrics for “Red River Valley”, a song said to be “of the Métis struggle to survive and a celebration of their recognition as a distinct culture” from the Manitoba Historical Society website at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/72/redrivervalley.shtml
6. Métis have official websites in several provinces, including Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia to honor their heritage and celebrate their culture. Students use one or more of the websites to plan a celebration of Métis. Students act as consultants to determine the location, plan the celebration, and identify the invited guests. Specifically, students can determine how the contribution of the Métis and the Red River trade should be celebrated in Minnesota.
 - Métis Nation of Ontario <http://www.metisnation.org/>
 - Métis Culture and Heritage Resource Centre <http://www.metisresourcecentre.mb.ca>
 - The Métis Nation of Saskatchewan <http://www.mn-s.ca/>
 - The Métis Nation in Alberta <http://www.albertasource.ca/METIS/eng/index2.htm>
 - British Columbia site on Métis <http://www.michifmetismuseum.org/Home.html>

Assessments

- “Métis Flag” handout
- “Métis and Their Red River Contribution” handout
- “Métis Settlement” handout
- “The Métis Today” handout
- Class discussion

Website Resources

“Red River Oxen Carts and Trails”, MAGE Podcast

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LFbNQh0x4M>

“Native Populations, Economies and Movement, ca 1820” Map at “CHAPTER: Native Canada ca 1820”, Historical Atlas of Canada

<http://www.historicalatlas.ca/website/hacolp/contents.htm>

“Canada. 2006 Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and Census Agglomerations (CAs) with a Métis Identity Population of 250 or more”, Map at Statistics Canada

<http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-558/tables-tableaux-notes-eng.cfm>

“Total Aboriginal Identity Population (1,400,685 nationally)” Map at Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1370438978311/1370439050610>

“Métis Homeland” Map at “An Indigenous History of North America: Borders and the Métis Nation”

<https://indigenousohistory.wordpress.com/2012/09/15/borders-and-the-metis-nation/>

Métis Population Distribution Map shown at “Métis Health/Wellbeing Programs & Services” at Métis Nation Health Portal

<http://www.metisportals.ca/healthportal/programs17907.htm#>

“Estimated Population of Canada, 1605 to present”, Statistics Canada

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/98-187-x/4064809-eng.htm>

“The Power of Whiteness: Or, the Life and Times of Joseph Rolette Jr.” by Bruce M. White Minnesota History, Winter, 1998-99, pp.178-197.

<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/56/v56i04p178-197.pdf>

Additional Website Resources

“Grade 4 Métis: Cross-Curricular Teacher Guide” at Métis Nation British Columbia

http://www.mnbc.ca/app/webroot/uploads/Documents/_Min_of_Ed/MNBC_Grade_4_Cross-Curricular_Teacher_Guide.pdf

Outstanding series of 8 lessons on the Métis including information on their culture, flag, Red River carts, and sashes

“Celebrating the Year of the Métis: Primary”, Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario

<http://www.etfo.ca/Resources/ForTeachers/Documents/Canadian%20Aboriginal%20Festival%202010%20Curriculum%20Connections%20-%20Primary%20Lessons.pdf>

Lesson plan about Métis heroes and role models with biographies of Louis Riel, Pauline Johnson, Todd Ducharme, and Christi Belcourt

“Lesson 5: Métis Agriculture in Saskatchewan” at Agriculture in the Classroom Saskatchewan

www.aipc.sk.ca/files/sara/Lesson%205%20handouts.doc

Lesson Plan in which students learn about the Métis with a jigsaw of their understanding of “Who Are the Métis?”, “The 1885 Resistance”, “Métis Food & Diet”, and “Métis Farming”.

“Minnesota’s Métis and French Canadians (Untold Stories 2015)” with Professor Virgil Benoit, Podcast from Friends of the St. Paul Public Library, May 19, 2015 (1:06:47)

<http://thefriends.org/blog/2015/06/04/podcast-minnesotas-metis-and-french-canadians-untold-stories-2015/>

“Métis Population...” from Statistics Canada, Table 13 at

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-552-x/2015001/t/tbl13-eng.htm>

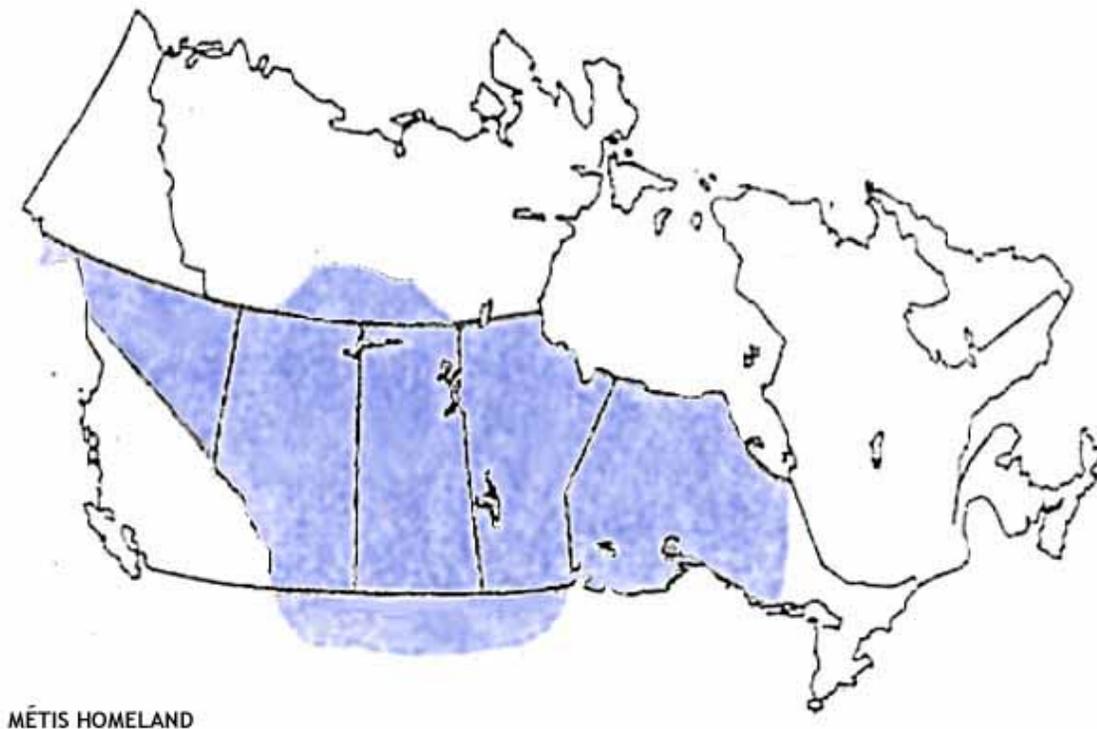
“Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit” from Statistics Canada at

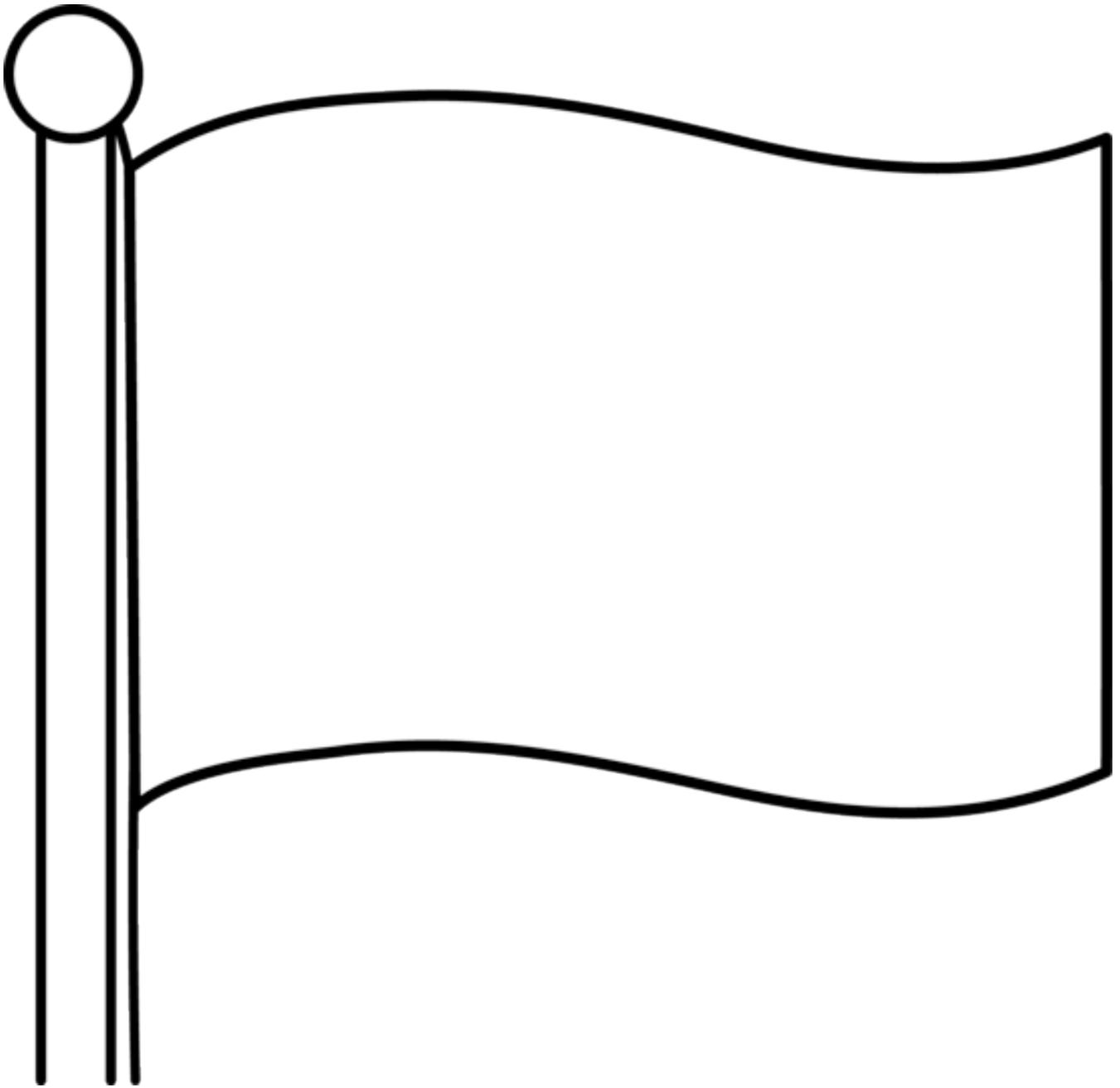
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>

Métis Flag

Directions: Your task is to determine the Metis national flag based on the information given below. Identify the design and colors by completing the flag and providing an explanation.

- Métis are people of Native American and European backgrounds
- Métis means “mixed” in French
- They created their own language that blends mainly Cree and French languages
- They were the voyageurs who trapped and traded furs
- They worked mainly for the Montreal-based Northwest Fur Company because they were French rather than the British Hudson’s Bay Company
- The colorful, multi-use sash is a traditional piece of clothing
- As interpreters they served as the link between Europeans and First Nations
- They originally settled on or near the Red River before migration west into Saskatchewan
- They hunted buffalo and farmed crops using French long lots
- They originated the Red River cart that was used as a freight cart for buffalo and other furs
- Their distinct culture is a blend of Cree with French, Scottish, and Irish characteristics
- Métis have their own language, music, art, religion (blend of Catholic and Native American, and later, Protestant), and politics
- Métis are identified as one of 3 Aboriginal groups in Canada: First Nations, Inuit, Metis
- They were discriminated and persecuted because they were considered neither European nor Native American





Explanation of Flag

Why did the Metis Use Red River Carts & Why did They Trade with St. Paul?

The Red River trading routes were networks of ox cart trails from the settlements in the Red River Valley (Pembina and Winnipeg) to their destinations in Minnesota (Mendota and later, St. Paul). The Métis traded furs (beaver, muskrat) for goods, including seeds, tools, and food staples and later, luxury items such as fine cloth, household goods, and machinery. The trade dramatically changed both the Red River settlements and St. Paul.

The Métis lived in small settlements along the Red River in what is now the U.S. and Canada. They worked mainly for the Montreal-based Northwest Fur Company rather than Hudson's Bay Company until the NW Company merged with Hudson's Bay in 1821. Now, the Métis needed to consider who and how to trade their furs.

The two previous trading routes, both water routes, were the 800 miles to York, located at the SW coast of Hudson Bay through Hudson's Bay territory, or the 500 miles to Fort William on Lake Superior at Thunder Bay owned by the former Montreal-based Northwest Fur Company. But both routes could only handle light cargo carried in canoes with numerous portages across large lakes, rapidly flowing rivers, and through swampy areas. An alternate route of less than 500 miles was found through the southern plains with the building of

land transportation—the Red River Cart.

The Red River cart was a two-wheeled small wooden wagon pulled by oxen and used extensively from the 1820s until the 1880s when the railroad replaced it. The cart had several advantages: It could be built with local wood; it could be repaired with found wood; it could be converted to a raft when the wheels were taken off in order to cross rivers; and it could haul a substantial amount of goods when pulled by oxen. Although horses purchased from Native Americans were first used, horses could not carry the heavy loads of furs; in fact, five horses were needed to replace one ox. Each cart also carried 4-5 replacement axles for the trip to St. Paul. The carts were noisy, but the wheels couldn't be greased or, when dust and dirt mixed with the grease, would become rigid and immovable. A caravan of carts would be in line using one of three trails from the Red River to St. Paul.

The West Plains trail ran parallel to the Red River along the uplands instead of next to the Red River for several reasons. Greater river widths could be avoided by crossing away from the confluences of the Red River's tributaries; lowland swamps and floods could be avoided as well; and grazing land for the oxen could be found. Stops were developed at

various forts and missions along the way that led to Mendota, and later St. Paul, from where the furs were shipped on the Mississippi River to St. Louis and to the East. When Hudson's Bay Company tried to stop the lucrative trade, the origin was changed to Pembina, located today across the border in North Dakota, which land Hudson's Bay Company did not control.

Other routes were also used, but there were always concerns about going through lands of the Dakota people who were the enemy of the Ojibwa, to whom the Métis were related.

The quest for a Métis homeland led by Louis Riel caused the creation of Manitoba in 1870, which ended Hudson's Bay Company control of the land and attempt to control the trade. Soon steamboats and later railroads operated along the Red River and opened the region to new immigrants. However, the Métis were not accepted as Europeans or Native Americans and were shunned, harmed and disenfranchised. Many chose to move west into Saskatchewan and other places where they could live free with their own culture and identity.

The Red River trading network of the Métis was critically important. It encouraged development of the Lake Winnipeg Watershed area by increasing trade. It also increased Minnesota's economy through trade with both the Métis and with the East,

aided the settlement of Minnesota, increased the settlement of Manitoba as well as Saskatchewan and, later, Alberta, and threatened Canada's control of its western territories, leading Canada to claim and develop its western territories.



Red River trail sign



Ruts from the Red River trail can still be seen 150 years after it ended

Questions:

1. Why did the Métis use Red River carts?
2. Why did they trade with St. Paul?
3. Why did the Métis prefer the West Plains trail?
4. Why did the Red River carts end?
5. How did Red River trade encourage the early wealth and growth of the Twin Cities

Métis and Their Red River Contribution

Fort Snelling was built in 1819 at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers to primarily protect the fur trade, but also to ensure the safety of European settlers, protect the borders, and monitor immigrants coming into the lands. Across the river was the trading post in Mendota, the terminus of the Red River trails. Trade continued at Mendota, but by 1850 it had moved to St. Paul.

Pierre Parrant, a Métis nicknamed “Pig’s Eye” who was blind in one eye, was a retired fur trader who helped to establish St. Paul. When Parrant built a tavern in St. Paul in 1838, the site became known as Pig’s Eye. By 1841 when Father Galtier built a chapel and renamed the city St. Paul, trading had extended to the city. Steamboat traffic increased because St. Paul was a river port; its geography offered two landings able to accommodate steamships making the city the new terminus for the Red River trade. Immigrants were coming into the city and businesses were flourishing, so it was logical that when Minnesota became a territory in 1849, St. Paul would become its capitol.

Questions:

1. Why did the Métis use Red River carts?
2. Why did they trade with St. Paul?
3. Why did the Métis prefer the West Plains trail?
4. Why did the Red River carts end?
5. Explain how Red River trade encouraged the early wealth and growth of the Twin Cities.

Métis Settlement

Directions

Examine the Lake Winnipeg Watershed map and its features to answer the following questions about Métis settlement.

1. Examine the map to locate the city of Winnipeg. Use the features of the area, the legend, and the inset maps as well as your knowledge of the area to determine why the Winnipeg area was an ideal location for the first western settlements in Canada by the Métis.

2. The city of Winnipeg was part of the Red River Colony. The colony was started in 1812 as the first entirely agricultural settlement in western Canada—west of the rugged Canadian Shield. Scottish immigrants came to farm these new lands with its rich alluvial soils. The Métis also farmed, but were primarily buffalo hunters and fur traders. Two other cities, Selkirk and Pembina, were also part of the region and were important to Minnesota in the early 1800s as well. Begin by finding the small city of Selkirk on the map, which is located north of Winnipeg. When trade routes were established, Pembina, located across the border in North Dakota, was the origin. These were the three largest settlements in the area in 1825. Examine the Lake Winnipeg Watershed map and write 3 conclusions about the settlements identifying what all 3 have in common.

3. Aboriginal people in Canada are identified as First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Most Inuit live in the northern Nunavut Territory, which is not shown on the Lake Winnipeg Watershed map. Where do the First Nations and Métis live? Examine the legend to identify where they live and the pattern of their location.

4. The influence of the Métis remains. Name 3 places with French names (towns, rivers). [Note: Some names are French and others are labeled with both French and English names.]

Métis Settlement Key

Directions

Examine the Lake Winnipeg Watershed map and its features to answer the following questions about Métis settlement.

1. Examine the map to locate the city of Winnipeg. Use the features of the area, the legend, and the inset maps as well as your knowledge of the area to determine why the Winnipeg area was an ideal location for the first western settlements in Canada by the Métis.

- Edge of Forests with access to woods and animals
- Not in the Wetlands where travel is difficult
- At confluence of Red River and Assiniboine River for trade and transportation
- Rich alluvial soils for farming
- Buffalo herds for hunting and trading
- Fur-bearing animals for trading
- Milder climate in southern area of watershed
- Existing populations of Native Americans and voyageurs live in the area

2. The city of Winnipeg was part of the Red River Colony. The colony was started in 1812 as the first entirely agricultural settlement in western Canada—west of the rugged Canadian Shield. Scottish immigrants came to farm these new lands with its rich alluvial soils. The Métis also farmed, but were primarily buffalo hunters and fur traders. Two other cities, Selkirk and Pembina, were also part of the region and were important to Minnesota in the early 1800s as well. Begin by finding the small city of Selkirk on the map, which is located north of Winnipeg. When trade routes were established, Pembina, located across the border in North Dakota, was the origin. These were the three largest settlements in the area in 1825. Examine the Lake Winnipeg Watershed map and write 3 conclusions about the settlements identifying what all 3 have in common.

- They are located on the Red River
- They are located in the Grassland region
- They have access to water transportation and fertile soil
- They are the gateway settlements to the rest of the watershed and to Canada's west
- They are all located within 140 kilometers of the Canada-U.S. border (less than 100 miles)

3. Aboriginal people in Canada are identified as First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Most Inuit live in the northern Nunavut Territory, which is not shown on the Lake Winnipeg Watershed map. Where do the First Nations and Métis live? Examine the legend to identify where they live and the pattern of their location.

- Half of First Nations people live in First Nations Reserves that are located primarily in Saskatchewan and Alberta with few in Manitoba; they seem to be located on or near water
- There is no land set aside for the Métis people; the map doesn't identify where they live

4. The influence of the Métis remains. Name 3 places with French names (towns, rivers). [Note: Some names are French and others are labeled with both French and English names.]

- Beausejour, Portage la Prairie, Dauphin, Dauphin Lake, Lake Lac Winnipegosis, Lake/Lac Manitoba, Lake/Lac Winnipeg, Qu Appelle River, Riviere Saskatchewan Nord, Riviere Saskatchewan Sud, Riviere La Biche, Riviere Bow, Riviere Souris, Riviere Berens, Riviere Bloodvein, Riviere Manigotagan, Riviere Winnipeg, Seine River

The Métis Today

Early Métis Population

Métis settlement began on and near the Red River. The Métis population of Pembina was 1,134 according to the 1850 Census, which was almost 19% of Pembina County's entire population. Meanwhile, St. Paul had 1500 residents in 1850. The entire population of the Minnesota Territory in 1850 was just over 6,000 with 2,000 to 3,000 identified as Métis—making one-third to one-half of Minnesota's territory population Métis. The birthplace of people in the Minnesota Territory in the 1850 Census identified as:

- 728 from British Red River (from the Red River populations in Canada)
- 666 from Eastern Canada
- 1509 from Minnesota Territory

Although not all the people were Métis, the population of the Red River area in 1838 was less than 4000 people. In 1856 the population was less than 7000. In 1870 the population was just over 10,000. Compare these population figures with the population of St. Paul:

1850	1500 people
1860	10,000
1870	Just over 20,000

Accurate Métis numbers in Minnesota have not been available. Probably the most famous Métis was Pierre Parrant, known as "Pig's Eye" Parrant, who helped to found St. Paul. Although not all people of French ancestry were Métis, many adopted the culture of the Métis (such as Joseph Rolette). The Métis were recognized as a distinct group of people when a reservation was finally set aside for them near Wabasha in 1854, but white settlers came and the reserved lands for Métis did not occur.

When Canada became a country in 1867 through Confederation, Manitoba was a territory with Métis, First Nations, and Europeans. The new government of Canada purchased the Hudson Bay's Company's land. The Métis were upset because of the possible loss of their land, their Catholic religion, and their culture and wanted to create their own province. They selected Louis Riel, a Métis who today is considered one of the founders of Manitoba, to lead negotiations with the new Canada government. However, tensions increased and, in 1870, the Manitoba Act resolved the situation with the Métis receiving title to their lands. Unfortunately, the promises were not kept and the Métis lost their lands. With increased immigration to the area, many Métis decided to migrate to other areas of Canada.

Summarized from: "Manitoba and Confederation", The Canadian Encyclopedia

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/manitoba-and-confederation/>

Question:

- What generalizations can you make about the Métis population before 1850?

Current Métis Population

The Métis people live in the Great Lakes region and in western Canada as they have for centuries. Almost 450,000 people are Métis, which is one-third of the total Aboriginal population in Canada. Nearly 70% of Métis live in urban areas. The urban area with the most Métis is Winnipeg with 50,000 people followed by Edmonton (32,000), Vancouver (19,000) and Calgary (17,9000).

The province of Alberta has the largest number of Métis (96,000) with Ontario (81,000), Manitoba (79,000), British Columbia (67,000), Saskatchewan (53,0900) and Quebec (36,000) having a large proportion as well.

The total Aboriginal population is 1,500,000, which is 4% of Canada's total population of 34,273,000, and is composed of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. The First Nations population is almost 900,000, which is 61% of the total Aboriginal population. The Inuit number almost 60,000, which is 4% of the total Aboriginal population. The Métis population is 450,000, which is 32% of the Aboriginal population.

The Métis are a disenfranchised people, having lost their lands and still seeking recognition of their land claims as well as their identity from local, provincial and national governments. They are identified as Aboriginal, but are not considered Aboriginal within various laws that would grant them their homelands and hunting and fishing rights.

The Métis contribute to Canadian society through their skills in business, education, health care, and fine arts just as other people. However, many still retain their traditional culture of religious beliefs, customs, foods, music, and dance; and a few people over 65 years old still speak their language, Michif, a combination of Cree and French.

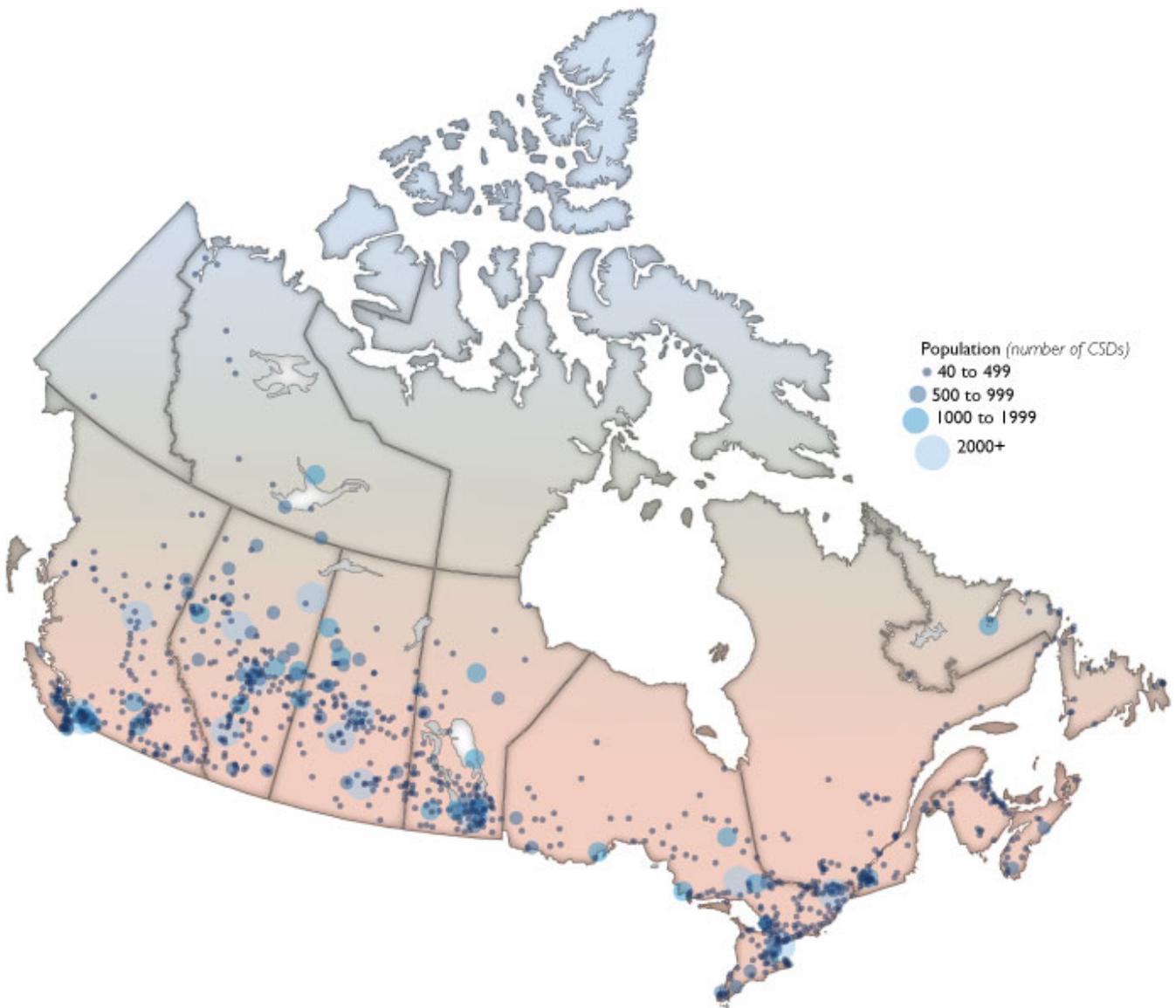
"We are Métis, with roots and rights that extend 9,000 years into this continent. We are neither First Nations nor Inuit, nor are we European immigrants to this land. Instead, we are the middle-ground between camps; the compromise between differences and the dawn that separates night and day. We are not half-breeds, but the children born of a marriage between two very different worlds ... To be Métis is to be blessed with the best fruit of not one, but two family trees. We are not "half" of anything, but doubled. Being twice blessed, we are likewise proud, strong, and determined."

- Terry St. Amant, The Georgian Bay Métis Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario AZ

<http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/aborig/fp/fpz4b01e.shtml>

Questions:

- Examine the population maps and explain the distribution of Métis in Canada today.
- Evaluate the Homeland map. Is this a valid map of Métis homeland?
- What conclusions can you reach about the Métis population?
- How do they compare with other Aboriginal groups?
- Should Métis be labeled one of three Aboriginal groups in Canada?
- Should the Métis continue to be identified as a separate group of people?



CSDs=Census Subdivision; general term for municipalities or their equivalent for census purposes

