

Aboriginal Peoples of Alberta

Yesterday,
Today, and
Tomorrow



Photograph: Top to bottom
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As special thank you to all of the
individuals who contributed to this
booklet, as writers, as trusted
advisors, and also to those who
generously shared their voices with
all Albertans.

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Creating Understanding

“We are so close to the land. This is my body when you see this mother earth, because I live by it. Without that water, we dry up, we die. Without food from the animals, we die because we got to live on that. That’s why I call that spirit, and that’s why we communicate with spirits. We thank them every day that we are alive.”

*Elder Alex Skead
Royal Commission on
Aboriginal Peoples,
Volume 1, Chapter 2
April 22, 1992*

Aboriginal people in Alberta are culturally diverse—from the Dene in the subarctic north to the Woodland Cree in the boreal forest and the Blackfoot of the southern plains, and the Métis throughout the province. From time immemorial, First Peoples lived close to the land, and so it shaped each group’s culture—the collection of beliefs, values, and knowledge they share.

While the Blackfoot gathered in huge camps on the plains, with their lifestyle centred on the great buffalo hunts that provided vast amounts of food, the Dene lived in small groups, gathering edible plants, game animals, and fish in the extensive forests and lakes.

For all their diversity, First Peoples have much in common. Foremost was a reverence for the natural world, the web of relationships linking every human to every other thing—be it plant or animal, rock or river, invisible spirit or thunderstorm. Living in harmony with their environment, they made little change in their surroundings for thousands of years.

“The land is our soul,” says Doug Cuthand in his book *Askiwina: A Cree World*.¹

“Our people believe that the earth and all creatures that live on it are a gift from the Creator. This beautiful land of lakes, forests, rivers, plains, and mountains is

a gift from the Creator and it must be respected and treated properly.”

This kinship with the natural world has created both stereotype and myth. As Reggie Crowshoe, Piikani (a nation belonging to the Blackfoot Confederacy) cultural teacher in southern Alberta says, “Indigenous people are victims of romanticism. Spiritual processes are often dismissed as exotic flights of fancy.”² But as a ceremonial practitioner who has studied Blackfoot culture, he says treating the earth as a living being and working with the spirits in all of life will be necessary when people finally realize they cannot dominate creation but, instead, must work with it.

As natural resources become scarce and environmental impacts increase, Reggie believes, indigenous knowledge of the natural world will find its rightful place in society.

“My father, Joe Crowshoe, often said that when the dominant society understands us like we understand the dominant society, then we’ll have a good life,”³ says Reggie. Joe welcomed everyone into Blackfoot ceremony, and in 1986, when a group of journalists entered his tipi during a sacred bundle-opening, he not only invited them to stay but encouraged them to take notes.

¹ Doug Cuthand, *Askiwina: A Cree World* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2007).

² Interview with Reggie Crowshoe, Piikani, April, 2011/2013.

³ Reggie Crowshoe, 2013.

This booklet provides a starting point for moving toward the kind of understanding Joe Crowshoe talked about. *Aboriginal Peoples of Alberta: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* is a look at Alberta's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples yesterday, today, and into the future. It provides a glimpse of these resilient cultures that continue to thrive—their history, current issues, and some exciting opportunities on the horizon.

The history of Aboriginal peoples is an important part of our story and legacy. Aboriginal peoples and communities are vital to our future goals of a prosperous and thriving Alberta. Having a better understanding of Alberta's Aboriginal peoples creates an opportunity for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Albertans to move forward together.

For readers who want to know more on this subject, see the list of resources on page 48.



*Elder Joe Crowshoe
(Photo by Dianne Meili)*

“Some tribes say they don't want outsiders or they don't want young people at ceremonies. Well, that's not sharing or communicating. I share with people who are sincerely interested in learning about a deeper way of looking at life, about a life force flowing through you that is limited only by earthly worries.”



⁴ Richard Price, *Legacy: Indian Treaty Relationships* (Edmonton: Plains Publishing Inc., 1991).

Chapter 1

In the Beginning

Long before Alberta became a province, Aboriginal peoples inhabited this land, speaking distinct languages, creating complex government, social and economic systems, and moving with the ebb and flow of the natural world. Indigenous history is etched into the Alberta landscape going back 11,000 years and 500 generations—from rock carvings at Writing-on-Stone in the southern part of the province, to a 10,000-year-old spear point unearthed in the Athabasca lowlands in the north.

Today, Alberta is home to more than 220,000 people descended from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Their presence predates both Alberta and Canada, yet not all Albertans are familiar with the rich histories and cultures of Aboriginal peoples, or with their present-day contributions and aspirations.

The unique world view of Aboriginal people—or any people, for that matter—can be traced back to their creation story, a symbolic narrative of how the world began and how people first came to inhabit it. Creation stories explain a people's sense of who they are in the context of the world, and in so doing they reveal real priorities, as well as values.

Creation stories develop in oral traditions and therefore have multiple versions. The one shared here is adapted from a version told by the late Francis Tootoosis, originally from Poundmaker First Nation in Saskatchewan. He lived on the Samson Cree Nation at the time of the telling of this story.

The Cree Creation Story—Wesakechak

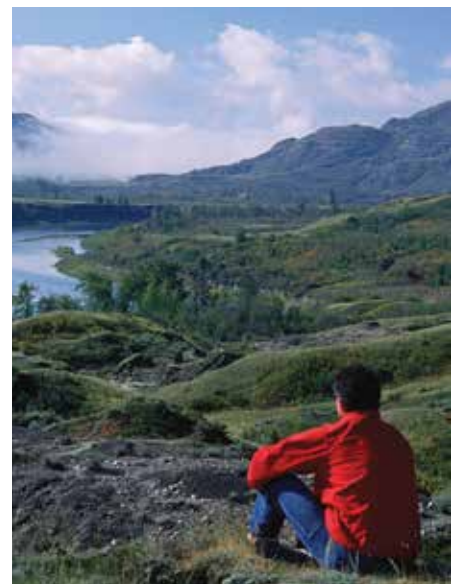
Wesakechak is a famous Cree hero, who lived when the Earth was still being formed. He is a trickster figure with many powers, such as the ability to change shape and be anything he wants, and to speak the languages of the animals and plants. No one really knows what he looks like. Wesakechak stories are meant to be narrated and not read. The spirit, humour, and excitement of his experiences are best appreciated in the language in which they were first told.⁵

Wesakechak was a young man who often got into trouble. After the Creator had made all the animals and the first people, he said to Wesakechak, “Take good care of my people, and teach them how to live. Show them all the bad roots, all the


roots that will hurt them and kill them. Do not let the people or the animals quarrel with each other.”

But Wesakechak did not obey the Creator. He let the creatures do whatever they wished to do. Soon they were quarrelling and fighting. The Creator, greatly displeased, warned Wesakechak, “If you do not keep your world peaceful and beautiful, I will take everything away from you, and you will be miserable.”

But Wesakechak did not believe the Creator and did not obey. Becoming more and more careless and disobedient, he tricked the animals and the people and made them angry with each other. They quarrelled



⁵ From the Naheyawawin website, Galileo Educational Network, 2008 Mokakioyis/Meyopimatisiwin, accessed August, 2013



and fought so much that the Earth became red with blood.

This time the Creator became very angry. "I will take everything away from you and wash the ground clean," he said.

Still Wesakechak did not believe the Creator. He did not believe until the rains came and the streams began to swell. Day after day, and night after night, the rains continued. The water in the rivers and the lakes rose higher and higher. At last they overflowed their banks and washed the ground clean. The sea came up on the land, and everything was drowned except one otter, one beaver, and one muskrat.

Wesakechak tried to stop the sea, but it was too strong for him. He sat down on the water and wept. Otter, Beaver, and Muskrat sat beside him and rested their heads against him.

In time the rain stopped and the sea left the land. Wesakechak took courage, but he did not dare to speak to the Creator. After long and sad thoughts about his misery, he said to himself, "If I could get a bit of the old earth beneath the water, I could make a little island for us to live on."

He did not have the power to create anything, but he did have the power to expand what had already been created. As he could not dive and did not know how far it was to the old earth, he did not know what to do. Taking pity on him, the Creator said, "I will give you the power to remake everything if you will use the old materials buried under the water."

Still floating on the sea, Wesakechak said to the three animals beside him, "We shall starve unless one of you can bring me a bit of the old ground beneath the water. If you will get it for me, I will make an island for us." Then he turned to the otter. "You are brave and strong and active. If you will dive into the water and bring me a bit of earth, I will see that you have plenty of fish to eat."

So the otter dove, but he came up again without having reached the ground. He tried a second time with no success, and Wesakechak praised Otter and persuaded him to go down once more. When he returned the third time, he was so weary that he could not dive again.

"You are a coward!" exclaimed Wesakechak. "I am surprised by your weak heart." Then he turned to Beaver. "You are brave and strong

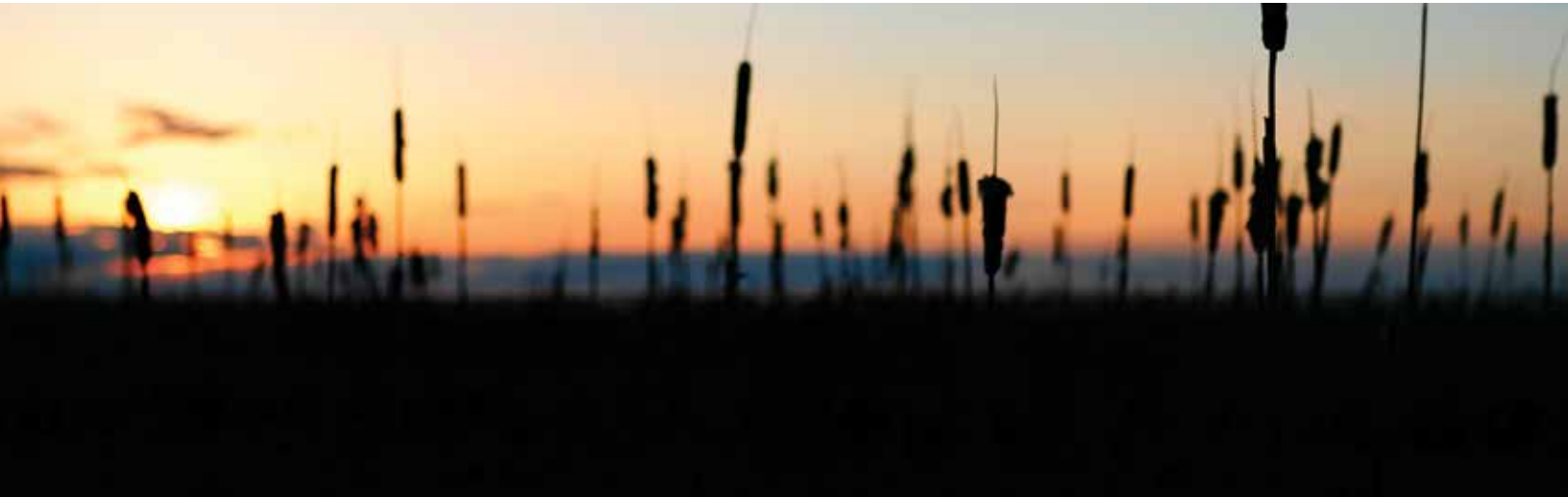
and wise. If you will dive into the water and bring me a bit of the old earth, I will make a good house for you on the new island I shall make. There you will be warm in the winter. Dive straight down, as a brave beaver does."

Twice Beaver dived, and twice he came back without any earth. The second time he was so tired that Wesakechak had to let him rest for a long time.

"Dive once more," urged Wesakechak when Beaver had recovered. "If you will bring me a bit of earth, I will make a wife for you." To obtain a wife, Beaver went down a third time. He stayed so long that he came back almost lifeless, still with no earth in his paws.

Wesakechak was now very sad. If Otter and Beaver could not reach the bottom of the water, surely Muskrat also would fail. But he was their only chance.

"You are brave and strong and quick, Muskrat, even if you are small. If you will dive into the water and bring me a bit of the old earth at the bottom, I will make plenty of roots for you to eat. I will create rushes, so that you can make a nice house with rushes and dirt.



“Otter and Beaver are fools,” continued Wesakechak. “They got lost. You will find the ground if you will dive straight down.”

So Muskrat jumped head first into the water. Down and down he went, but he brought back nothing. A second time he dived and stayed a long time. When he returned, Wesakechak looked at his forepaws and sniffed.

“I smell the smell of earth,” he said. “Go again. If you bring me even a small piece, I will make a wife for you, Muskrat. She will bear you a great many children. Have a strong heart now. Go straight down, as far as you can go.”

This time Muskrat stayed so long that Wesakechak feared he had drowned. At last they saw some bubbles coming up through the water.

Wesakechak reached down his long arm, seized Muskrat, and pulled him up beside them. The little creature was almost dead, but against his breast his forepaws held a piece of the old earth.

Joyously, Wesakechak seized it, and in a short time he expanded the bit of earth into an island. There he, Muskrat, Otter, and Beaver rested and rejoiced that they had not drowned in the flood.

Some people say that Wesakechak obtained a bit of wood, from which he made the trees, and some bones, from which he made the second race of animals.

Others say that the Creator made all things again. He commanded the rivers to take the salt water back to the sea. Then he created mankind,

the animals of today, and the trees. He took from Wesakechak all power over people and animals and left him only the power to flatter and to deceive.

After that, Wesakechak played tricks on the animals and led them into much mischief.

Every First Nation, as well as the Inuit, possesses creation stories. The Blackfoot tell stories of Napi (Old Man), who is similar to Wesakechak, and who created what is in the world. The Nakoda have Iktomi, whose trials and errors are shared in stories that young people can learn from. The Inuit look to Sedna, who lives under the sea and who provides food for them, even in the depths of winter. Stories of these cultural heroes are often humorous and reflect the values of First Peoples.

Museums, books, and the old stories passed down from time immemorial contain clues about early life among Alberta's First Peoples, but a life lived totally on the land is sometimes hard for us to fathom today. First Peoples in this province were hunters and harvesters, relying on game like buffalo, caribou, deer, moose, rabbit, and ducks, as well as fish. Their living came straight from the land, and many of their ceremonies expressed thanks for what they were able to harvest. The following three scenarios from the Siksika (a group affiliated with the Blackfoot Confederacy), Cree Métis, and Dene cultures, spreading from the south of the province up to the north, provide a snapshot of early life and culture.

Always on the Move (Siksika)⁶

Chief Mad Wolf (Siyeh) was a great orator among the Blackfoot, leader of the sun dance, and the owner of the Beaver Medicine Bundle. He was healthy and lived to an old age, leading his people in a nomadic lifestyle of harvesting and hunting, their seasonal migration following specific patterns.

After a long, cold winter in what is now southern Alberta, Mad Wolf's

people moved their camp from the shelter of the river valleys onto the wide expanses of the grasslands. They chose campsites on high land, near wood and water, and ventured from there to hunt buffalo.

In the summer, when the saskatoon berries ripened, they travelled to a traditional gathering place. Here friendships, trades, and marriages were made—and the sun dance ceremonial was held—as members of the Blackfoot Confederacy met within a great cluster of lodges. It was the only time of the year when they lived in one place. This they called *Akoka'tssin*, "the time of all people camping together."

In late summer, the people split from their large group and spread out to hunt buffalo and to gather berries.

In the fall, the group migrated back toward their wintering grounds. They built a buffalo pound near the *piskan* (buffalo jump). Several groups worked together in communal hunts.

When frosty nights returned, the people moved into a wooded river valley, not far from other wintering groups, including the buffalo, who also preferred sheltered areas at this time of year. If there was adequate

firewood and food, the people might remain at a single campsite the entire winter. During the long, cold nights, the people engaged in storytelling, educating, socializing, and ceremonies.⁷

First Buffalo Hunt⁸

From miles away, Victoria Callihoo could hear the squeaking wheels of 30 Red River carts making their way toward her.

She was only 13 years old when she joined the procession, rolling along the Lac Ste. Anne trail heading toward St. Albert and then south to the buffalo plains. Kininawis, her mother, chose Victoria to participate in the buffalo hunt because she was the most enterprising of all her children. Leaving Alexis, Kininawis's husband, behind to tend the family farm, mother and daughter crossed the North Saskatchewan River near Fort Edmonton to head out on the hunt.

That summer of 1874, Victoria's job was to keep the meat-smoking fires stoked while her mother, a medicine woman, attended to the sick and injured among the huge group.

While Victoria and her mother stayed in camp, out on the plains, scouts

⁶ McClintock, Walter. *The Old North Trail, Life, Legends and Religion of the Blackfeet Indians*. (University of Nebraska Press, 1968).

⁷ Kainai Board of Education, Métis Nation of Alberta, Northland School Division, Tribal Chiefs Institute of Treaty Six. *Aboriginal Studies 10: Aboriginal Perspectives* (Edmonton: Duval House Publishing Inc., 2004).

⁸ MacEwan, Grant. *And Mighty Women Too: Stories of Notable Western Canadian Women* (Regina: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1975).

searched for buffalo herds. Once one was spotted, men and boys rode forward in single-line formation. At a signal from the captain of the hunt, the riders charged the buffalo, causing them to stampede. The riders would gallop on their best horses into the herd, select an animal, and fire at point-blank range. Some of the most experienced hunters, on well-trained mounts, could kill ten to twelve buffalo in two hours.

Victoria and Kininawis ventured out of the camp when the killing was over. They helped other women and children skin, butcher, and carry the meat back to camp for processing. Everyone returned to their homes with carts laden with dried meat, pemmican, hides, and sinew.

Dene Tha'⁹

In the intense cold of northern Alberta, survival could be a constant struggle. Winter snows came early, drifting deep and lingering far into spring. Starvation was never far away. Animal populations fluctuated from



Victoria Callihoo (photographer unknown)

year to year, and when larger game grew scarce, hunters would turn to rabbit, muskrat, and porcupine.

The Dene Tha", moved through the subarctic forests, tracking moose, bear, and caribou, and using bark from birch trees to fashion tent covers, water pails, and canoes. Spruce, birch, or willow branches could be bent into loops and, laced with leather webbing, transformed into snowshoes.

People used dog teams and sleds or pack dogs to travel. A team of four to six dogs was used to pull supplies and move equipment. Taking care of the dogs was very important to the survival of hunters and trappers, who usually fed their dogs before they ate.

When summer came, the Dene Tha' placed their heavy furs and snowshoes in a cache in a tree, to be collected when the temperatures dropped later that year.

The hand drums sounded, songs received in dreams were sung, and prophecies from the spirit world were voiced at tea dances, held often (as they still are) to petition the Creator for food, to give thanks, and to socialize.

Chapter 3

Aboriginal Peoples

Aboriginal people, as the first inhabitants of this land we call Canada, are divided into three distinct groups recognized under the *Constitution Act 1982*: Indian, Inuit, and Métis. They are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.

Formal definitions of Indian, Métis, and Inuit peoples are complex and they have been revised from time to time as a result of court challenges and changes to legislation.

Here is a quick overview of definitions, court rulings, and legislation that apply to determining who is eligible to claim status or membership as an Indian, Métis, or Inuit person.

Status Indian: A First Nations person who is registered according to the *Indian Act's* requirements and therefore qualifies for treaty rights and benefits. The *Indian Act* is Canadian federal legislation, which was first passed in 1876 and amended several times since.

Treaty Indian: A status Indian who belongs to a First Nation that signed a treaty with the Crown.

Non-Status Indian: A First Nations person who is not registered under the *Indian Act*, for whatever reason, according

to the act's requirements and therefore does not qualify for the rights and benefits given to people registered as status Indians.

First Nations: refers to individuals and to communities (or reserves) and their governments (or band councils). The term arose in the 1980s and is politically significant because it implies possession of rights arising from historical occupation and use of territory. Though no Canadian legal definition of this term exists (the Constitution refers to Indians), the United Nations considers First Nations to be synonymous with indigenous peoples. Alberta is home to 48 First Nations.

In recent history, two specific amendments to the *Indian Act*, have significantly impacted who is eligible to be registered as an Indian under the *Indian Act*.

Bill C-31: This Bill eliminated discriminatory provisions in the *Indian Act*, including a section that resulted in Indian women losing their status when they married non-status men and allowed non-status women to gain Indian status when marrying status-Indian men. Women who had lost their Indian status through marriage could reclaim their status as a result of this Bill.

Section 35 of Canada's *Constitution Act* recognizes treaty rights, and legally protects rights that were in existence when the act came into force on April 17, 1982. The provision says:

35. (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.

(2) In this Act, "Aboriginal Peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis people of Canada.

(3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) "treaty rights" includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.

(4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.¹⁰

¹⁰ Government of Canada, *Constitution Act, 1867*, at <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-2.html#docCont>, accessed August 16, 2013.



Nellie Carlson

Saddle Lake First Nation's Nellie Carlson, who lives in Edmonton, was one of several women who formed the organization Indian Rights for Indian Women in 1971 to change the discriminatory section of the *Indian Act* after she married and lost her treaty rights. "It took us 23 years to work for Bill C-31. We never asked for compensation. We were not looking for fame, but just to get recognized as treaty Indians. We were looking to help our children," she says.¹¹

Photograph reprinted from *Disinherited Generations: Our Struggle to Reclaim Treaty Rights for First Nations Women and their Descendants*, University of Alberta Press (Edmonton, AB 2012).

Bill C-3: In 2010, the *Indian Act* was amended through Bill C-3 in response to the decision of the British Columbia Court of Appeal in *Mclvor v. Canada*. The court found that section 6 of the *Indian Act* discriminated on the basis of gender. The amendment to the *Indian Act* permits that an individual is entitled to be registered:

- whose mother lost Indian status upon marrying a non-Indian man
- whose father is a non-Indian;
- who was born after the mother lost Indian status but before April 17, 1985, unless the individual's parents married each other prior to that date; and
- who had a child with a non-Indian on or after September 4, 1951.

As a result, a child of someone in these circumstances is entitled to be registered as an Indian.

Métis: The Métis National Council defines Métis as "a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation."

Métis people were for many years refused political recognition by the federal government, under Section 91 (24) of the *Constitution Act* 1867. However, Métis people received recognition as Aboriginal peoples in the *Constitution Act* of 1982.

In its 2003, a landmark decision in *R. v. Powley*, the Supreme Court of Canada laid out a test to be used in determining whether a Métis person holds an Aboriginal right to hunt. This Supreme Court decision outlined three factors to recognize peoples claiming Métis rights. An individual must be part of a contemporary Métis community with links back to a historic Métis community, as well as self-identify with the Métis community and demonstrate an ancestral connection to the historic Métis community.

The individual must also be accepted by the contemporary community, the core of which is a past and ongoing participation and shared culture and traditions that constitute a Métis community and distinguish it from other groups.

In the *Daniels v. Canada*, the federal trial court case found in 2013, that Métis and non-Status First Nations people are "Indians" under the *Constitution Act, 1867*. The case has been appealed to the Federal Court of Appeal.

There are more than 96,000 Métis people living in Alberta, the largest Métis population of all the Canadian provinces,

Inuit: Inuit peoples are those of northern Canada, who live primarily in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Labrador, and northern Quebec. Inuit peoples also live in Greenland, Russia and Alaska.¹²

¹¹ *Disinherited Generations; Our Struggle to Reclaim Treaty Rights for First Nations Women and their Descendants*, Nellie Carlson and Kathleen Steinhauer as told to Linda Goyette, (The University of Alberta Press, 2012).

¹² Glossary paraphrased from Kainai Board of Education, Métis Nation of Alberta, Northland School Division, Tribal Chiefs Institute of Treaty Six. *Aboriginal Studies 10: Aboriginal Perspectives* (Edmonton: Duval House Publishing Inc., 2004).

Chapter 4

First Nations Peoples and Treaties

Treaties are sacred foundational documents for First Nations peoples. We often hear First Nations talk about honouring treaty rights, and their strong ties to the Crown. In order to gain a greater understanding of the past and present lives of First Nations peoples, it is important to gain an understanding of the relationship of First Nations peoples to treaties and treaty rights.

In the Canadian West and North, between 1871 and 1921, the Crown entered into treaties with various First Nations that enabled the Canadian government to actively pursue agriculture, settlement, and resource development. Because they are numbered 1 to 11, the treaties are often referred to as the “numbered treaties.” They cover northern Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, as well as portions of the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and British Columbia.

Under these treaties, the First Nations who occupied these territories gave up large areas of land to the Crown. In exchange, the treaties provided for such things as reserve lands and other benefits like farm equipment and animals, annual payments, ammunition, clothing, and certain rights to hunt and fish. The Crown

also dealt with matters such as schools on reserves, teachers, or educational help to the First Nation that signed treaties. Not all treaties are exactly the same. For example, Treaty No. 6 included a clause about a medicine chest.

There are different interpretations of what the signing of the treaties meant. For most First Nations, treaties were viewed as establishing a peaceful coexistence where land would be shared, not given away.

Alberta has three main treaty areas:

Treaty 6

- Signed at Carlton and Fort Pitt in 1876
- Covers central Alberta and Saskatchewan
- Includes 17 First Nations

Treaty 7

- Signed at the Blackfoot Crossing of Bow River and Fort McLeod in 1877
- Covers southern Alberta
- Includes 7 First Nations

Treaty 8

- Signed at Lesser Slave Lake and Fort Chipewyan in 1899
- Covers parts of northern Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories
- Includes 25 First Nations

Adhesions to Treaties

“Are the terms good forever? As long as the sun shines on us? Because there are orphans we must consider, so that there will be nothing to be thrown up to us by our people afterwards. We want a written treaty, one copy to be given to us so we know what we sign for. Are you willing to give means to instruct children as long as the sun shines and water flows, so that our children will grow up ever increasing in knowledge?”

Chief Kinosayoo, during the signing of Treaty 8.

Treaty adhesions are agreements signed with First Nations who were not present at the original treaty negotiations. From the First Nations’ perspective, adhesions are as significant as the treaties because, like the original treaties, they created an ongoing relationship with the Crown. Adhesions signed with First Nations throughout the areas, dealt with the initial treaty negotiations.

Numerous adhesions were made to Treaty 6 between 1877 and 1889, and several more were made between 1944 and 1956. Four adhesions were made to Treaty 8 over the first year.¹³

¹³ Kainai Board of Education, Métis Nation of Alberta, Northland School Division, Tribal Chiefs Institute of Treaty Six. *Aboriginal Studies 20: Peoples and Cultural Change* (Edmonton: Duval House Publishing Inc., 2005).

Chapter 5

Life for First Nations Peoples After Signing the Treaties

“The great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change.”

John A. Macdonald, 1887

As mentioned earlier, the land had a great influence on the First Nations’ way of life and also determined how they governed themselves. Those who lived in the warmer, more open plains, like the Blackfoot Confederacy, had highly structured organizations.

The members of the First Nations worked together to harvest buffalo and gathered for ceremonies, and they had a decentralized power base with different types of leaders so that, for example, the leader during times of peace was often different from the leader who took over during times of conflict.

In Alberta’s north, Dene Tha’, Dene Suliné, Dunne-za, and Woodland Cree peoples hunted game such as moose and caribou. This could not be done in, nor could it sustain, large groups. As a result, northerners lived in smaller, extended family groups, each with its own leader. That’s why there are more First Nations reserves in the northern part of the province.

In general, First Nations took an egalitarian approach to governance. They valued consensus, co-operation, sharing, and taking a holistic view.

The way of life of First Nations peoples changed dramatically with the signing of the treaties and enactment of the *Indian Act* in 1876. While treaties were being negotiated in the West, legislation

that would have deep and long-lasting impacts upon First Nations across Canada was introduced. The *Indian Act* was a consolidation of regulations that impacted First Nations peoples living throughout the country.

The act allowed the Department of Indian Affairs to intervene in a wide variety of internal band issues and make sweeping policy decisions, such as determining who was an Indian. Under the act, the Department would also manage Indian lands, resources, and moneys; control access to intoxicants; and promote “civilization.” The *Indian Act* was based on the premise that it was the Crown’s responsibility to care for and protect the interests of First Nations. It would carry out this responsibility by acting as a “guardian” until such time as First Nations could fully integrate into Canadian society.

The federal government intended to teach First Nations peoples to live the way Europeans lived and to assimilate them into society. Indian agents had the job of enforcing the rules.

Indian agents appointed by the government held all the legal power on reserves. Sent to administer the reserves and people living on reserves, they had sweeping powers ranging from control of First Nations’ movement to control of agricultural equipment and expenditures by the band.



Indian agents were responsible for assigning housing, making sure children went to school, seeing that First Nations members started farming, and giving permission to Indian peoples to leave the reserve. Their power undermined that of traditional leaders.

Indian agents also introduced a pass system that required First Nations peoples living on reserves to get the Indian agents' written permission to leave the reserve. First Nations peoples who did not live on the reserve needed a pass to visit. Although the pass system was never legislated, it was enforced until the 1940s. It is believed that the pass system benefited the agents and the government by preventing First Nations peoples from gathering and forming alliances, making it difficult for parents to visit children in residential schools and making it less likely that they would break the ban on some ceremonies.

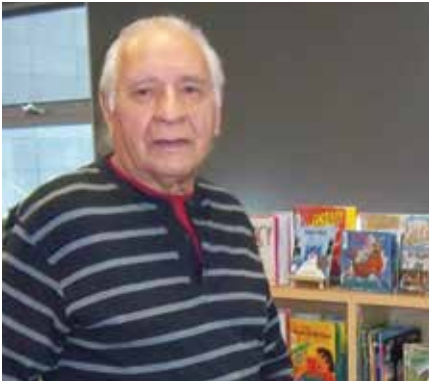
The *Indian Act* outlawed traditional activities such as giveaways, and the spiritual practice of the sun dance.

Under the *Indian Act*, the federal government also implemented the residential school system. Designed to promote assimilation by removing children from their families and traditional way of life, the residential school system led, in many cases, to loss of identity, culture, language, parenting and traditional skills and self-esteem. It resulted in intergenerational trauma, affecting thousands of individuals and numerous communities.

The residential school system is a dark legacy in the education of First Nations peoples. In addition to being isolated from their families, communities, culture, and language, there were numerous cases of physical and sexual abuse.

“Every Indian or other person who engages in... any Indian festival dance or other ceremony of which the giving away of paying or giving back of money, goods or articles of any sort forms... and every Indian or other person who engages or assists in any celebration or dance of which the wounding or mutilation of the dead or living body of any human being or animal forms a part of is guilty of an indictable offence.”

Section 114 of the *Indian Act*
as amended in 1895



Author Larry Loyie

Excerpted from "The Healing, a Memoir for Four Voices" dramatic performance by Larry Loyie and Company, 2000

"In my early childhood, I lived a traditional Cree life in the forests of northern Alberta. My grandfather Edward Twin taught me how to live a good way of life. I shared his love for nature and all that I was learning about our culture. At nine years of age, I was called *Oskiniko* or 'young man' because I had already learned many of the skills needed by Aboriginal people to survive and live independent lives. I was going to a public school in Slave Lake, the nearby town, speaking English, and learning to read and write.

At the age of eight, I lost this beautiful way of life when I was forced to leave my family to attend a residential school. I was one of more than 150,000 Aboriginal children who experienced these schools across Canada.

For six years at St. Bernard Mission residential school in Grouard, I wasn't allowed to speak Cree or talk to my sisters. To support the school, we children did many chores that took us away from the classroom. I went home every summer for two months, but others stayed at the school year-round. The adults could punish us whenever they wanted, which they often did. It was a lonely and frightening life. Our parents could be put in jail if they tried to keep us at home.

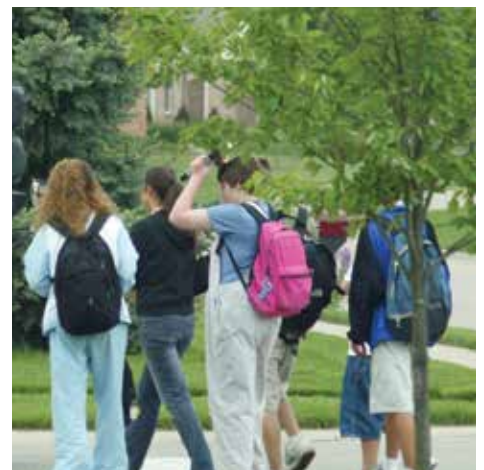
At 13 years of age, I felt joy to be released from the prison-like school. I had wanted to get a good education. This didn't happen, as most of the teachers were not trained. I did have one educated teacher, Sister Theresa, who inspired me to continue learning. I am grateful to her.

The history of residential schools must be known to ensure the future human rights of Canadian children. Residential schools no longer exist, but they must not be forgotten. Although the residential school system destroyed many families and too many lives, they did not destroy our cultures. Today, school programs and curriculum teach positive aspects of the Aboriginal way of life. I can now talk openly about residential school. The truth is out, and I am hopeful about the future. The children are being remembered and honoured at last."

From the 1880s to the 1990s, First Nations children were sent to federally funded, church-operated Indian residential schools, most often far away from their parents and their homes. Approximately 150,000 First Nations children attended residential schools across Canada.

Alberta had 25 Indian residential schools—the most of any province in Canada.

Recently, the Canadian government and several churches have issued apologies to the people who attended these schools. Canada also established The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to document and inform all Canadians about what really happened in residential schools and the impacts the schools had on Aboriginal peoples.



Chapter 6

Land Claims and Governance

While land claims are a federal responsibility, Alberta has a constitutional obligation under the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement (*Constitution Act, 1930*) to transfer unoccupied Crown lands back to Canada to settle claims.

Alberta is a leader in Canada in settling land claims, settling 12 since 1986.

In 1973, the federal government recognized two broad classes of claims: comprehensive and specific.

Comprehensive claims are based on the recognition that there are continuing Aboriginal rights to lands and natural resources. **Specific claims** deal with specific grievances that First Nations may have regarding the fulfillment of existing treaties.



Bigstone Treaty Land Entitlement

Bigstone Cree Nation signed Treaty 8 in 1899 and was provided with reserve land based on population surveys. In 1981, Bigstone claimed that the nation had not been given as much land as it was entitled to based on the 1913 and 1937 population surveys. The federal government accepted the claim in 1998 and negotiations began that resulted in the largest treaty land entitlement claim in Alberta being signed in 2010.

In 2010, Canada, Alberta, and the Bigstone Cree Nation (including the communities of Peerless Lake, Trout Lake, Chipewyan Lake, and Calling Lake) finalized the largest treaty land entitlement claim in Alberta.

Alberta was involved in the Bigstone negotiations since 1998 when the claim was accepted by Canada for negotiation. The parties reached an agreement in principle in 2007 and final agreement in 2010.

The end result was two agreements: one between Canada and Bigstone, and one between Canada and Alberta. Under the terms of the agreements:

- New reserves totalling 140,000 acres were set aside for Bigstone (including Chipewyan Lake and Calling Lake) and for a new First Nation composed of the Peerless Lake and Trout Lake communities.
- Alberta provided \$28 million, as well as compensation to construct two new elementary schools in Peerless Lake and Trout Lake.
- Canada contributed \$220 million, which included funds for catch-up infrastructure, in addition to a commitment to construct a new high school and health centre for the new Peerless Trout First Nation.



Bigstone Treaty signing ceremony 2010

¹⁴ Kainai Board of Education, Métis Nation of Alberta, Northland School Division, Tribal Chiefs Institute of Treaty Six. *Aboriginal Studies 30: Contemporary Issues* (Edmonton: Duval House Publishing Inc., 2005), 67–68.

Right to Vote

First Nations peoples did not always enjoy full citizenship in Canada. For example, while Canadians had the right to vote, First Nations peoples could only vote if they chose to give up their treaty rights and Indian status.

It wasn't until 1960 that First Nations peoples were granted the right to vote in federal elections in Canada, without having to give up their treaty rights and Indian status. First Nations were able to vote in provincial elections in Alberta in 1964.

They began to emerge as a people who could influence who was elected to their federal and provincial governments and could exercise their right to make political choices, like all other Canadians.

Moving Forward

Since the 1970s, First Nation councils have had more administrative control and communities have had the power to make more decisions. Education, public health, band administration, and reserve roads now fall under the authority of chiefs and councils. However, although they can pass bylaws, the bylaws must have federal approval.¹⁴

First Nation councils are elected. Some First Nations follow the *Indian Act*, holding elections by secret ballot every two years. Others have custom elections with their own rules. For example, the Kainai and Piikani First Nations hold elections every four years.¹⁵

Elders remain important in First Nation governments as a source of advice and guidance. One example is the Kainai Council of Elders, which is available for consultation and is influential in decision-making.¹⁶

Chief Frank Halcrow, of the Kapawe'no First Nation, is the last of the hereditary chiefs of Alberta.

Some responsibilities of chief and council include:

- Governance
- Community services like health, recreation, and culture

- Public works such as water treatment and delivery, road building, and maintenance
- Housing
- Economic development
- Education, training, and employment
- Finance
- Treaty rights
- Government and industry relations

Chief and council are supported by an administration that takes care of the day-to-day operations of the First Nation community. A chief executive officer oversees the administration, which includes departments such as finance, human resources, health, economic development, public works, education, and social development.

First Nations with mutual interests sometimes group together to form tribal councils. The councils provide member nations with advisory services on topics like economic development and financial management, and other services and programs. They are accountable to their members rather than to the federal government. There are seven tribal councils in Alberta.¹⁷ First Nations also join in provincial treaty organizations. There are three provincial treaty organizations and each represents all of the First Nation communities within a treaty area. The overall mandate of these three organizations is to promote and protect their respective treaties.

¹⁵ Contemporary Issues, 70.

¹⁶ Contemporary Issues, 71.

¹⁷ Contemporary Issues, 71.

Alberta's First Nations are building opportunities for their members; practising good governance; and improving their communities socially, economically, and culturally. In general, economic development for Alberta's First Nations peoples varies from community to community. Some communities, like Fort McKay First Nation, located in the heart of the oil sands, operate multi-million-dollar businesses. The

Fort McKay Group of Companies began over 25 years ago with a single janitorial contract and now offers long-term contracts in heavy equipment operations, warehouse logistics, road and grounds maintenance, bulk fuel and lube delivery, and land-leasing operations. The company employs approximately 500 people.

Excellence in Health Services

The Bigstone Health Centre is just one example of the infrastructure First Nations provide for their members. The centre is a first-class health facility implemented by the Bigstone Health Commission working together with band leadership. Serving the communities of Bigstone Cree Nation, it offers nursing; home care; maternal and child health, fitness, and wellness; dental; and industrial medical services.



At the 2011 Wabasca Treaty Days, Cliff Gladue has his blood pressure checked by a Bigstone Health Centre worker. (Photograph by Dianne Meili)

Chapter 7

The Past Shows the Way

Nowhere is the fact that Aboriginal culture is thriving more evident than in the way First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth are reclaiming who they are. As they learn about historic realities, such as residential schools, and how their families are affected, they counteract the dark repression of the past with vibrant creativity. They're not afraid to put a contemporary spin on old traditions, giving to the world such innovations as powwow dubstep, round dance songs with Facebook references in the lyrics, bannock burger food trucks in downtown Edmonton, and intricate beadwork on high-fashion evening wear.

Whether it's young women learning to craft birch-bark baskets at Treaty Days in Fort McKay, boys invited to sit and drum for the first time at a practice before the Lac La Biche Powwow, or adults learning to speak Tsuu T'ina Gunaha (language) from a picture book assembled by a community elder, committed individuals and groups ensure the values and skills of the past continue to show the way into the future.

Jerry Wood, an elder from Saddle Lake, says his culture has carried him through disease, oppression, poverty, and hardship. "So, my

Cree-ness—my beliefs, values, and the knowledge my own elders shared with me as a young man—has survived. What hasn't killed it, has only made it stronger." In the past, the dominant society misunderstood Aboriginal culture and enforced laws that devalued it, or quashed it altogether. As a result, many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people rejected tradition, thinking more avenues would be open to them if they simply assimilated. Now the pendulum is swinging the other way—and the cultural groups presented below are intact and continue to make this province richer and more diverse by their presence.

Here is an overview of the First Nations cultural groups in Alberta, presented in order of largest population to smallest.

Cree

Nehiyaw (Real People)

History

Cree people call themselves *Nehiyawak*—a two-part word that breaks down to mean the sacred number four (*newo*) and "the original healers" (*iyiniw*). Traditionalists refer to themselves as "four directions people."

The Cree are one of the largest First Nations in Canada and have one of the largest geographical distributions, extending from Alberta to Québec. The Plains Cree and Woodland Cree are the two groups in Alberta. Historically they were much the same, sharing a language and customs, but they lived differently because of their environments. For instance, Woodland Cree built their houses out of birch bark while Plains Cree used buffalo hide to build tipis.¹⁸

Entrepreneurial at heart, the Cree played a role in the fur trade as voyageurs, hunters, and trappers. Because many Cree women married European fur traders, Métis culture often shares elements of Cree culture.

Population on First Nations

Today, there are 32 federally recognized Cree First Nations in Alberta. The reserves are located in the Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 areas.

The population of Cree nations varies; the smaller reserves have a few hundred people while the larger nations have more than 7,000 members.

Language Family

Cree is a language in the Algonquian family. Plains Cree and Woodland

Cree have their own dialects, which, while different, are mutually understood.

Social and Economic Activities

Cree nations are socially and economically diverse. Communities located close to resources like oil sands and timber have enthusiastically developed companies to extract or harvest them, or provide services to existing industry. For instance, Mikisew Cree First Nation in Fort Chipewyan has built a highly successful group of companies that services the oil sands industry.

The Sawridge Group of Companies was founded by the Sawridge Cree First Nation of Slave Lake, Alberta. The first enterprise was the construction of a hotel at Slave Lake, in 1972. Ten years later in 1982, a parcel of land was acquired from Parks Canada and the tradition continued with the construction of a second hotel in Jasper National Park. The Sawridge Group of Companies consists of various real estate holdings, land developments, retail and service businesses and an additional three hotels, namely Fort McMurray, Peace River, and Edmonton.¹⁹

Most First Nations discussed in this booklet have websites outlining

economic, social, and cultural ways and activities. Visit their websites and search the name of the First Nation to learn more.

Did You Know?

Among the Plains Cree, when a child was born, his or her parents prepared food, bought lengths of cloth, filled the ceremonial pipe, and called in an old man. Many people came into the tipi to watch. They told the old man what they wanted and gave him the cloth and pipe. The old man lit the pipe and put it down, then talked to the Creator and to the Spirit that taught him to give names. After singing a song, he asked for the baby and gave it a name, begging the Creator to give it good luck so that it would grow up and become old. He asked the Spirit that gave him the power to give names to be the guardian of that child. Then the child was passed around the people until it reached its mother. As they held the child, the men and women expressed a good wish for the baby.

Some place names in Alberta that come from the Cree language are:

- Fort Chipewyan – named for the Cree word for the Chipewyan people, which means “pointed skins.” It referred to how the Chipewyans prepared beaver pelts.
- Wetaskiwin – an adaptation of the Cree word *wi-ta-ski-oo ch-ka-tin-ow*, meaning “place (or hill) of peace.”

Blackfoot Confederacy

Niitsítapi (Real People)

History

The Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), and Siksika nations in Alberta and the Blackfeet Nation in Montana, a division of the Piikani, form the Blackfoot Confederacy. Historically they were a single group that lived in large, clan-based groups on the plains and in the foothills. Today they are closely allied.

The culture of the Blackfoot Confederacy is traditionally linked to the buffalo, both economically and spiritually.²⁰ Historically they used piskans or buffalo jumps near foothill streams, like the one that can be seen at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Centre near Fort Macleod.

¹⁹ "About Sawridge Group", at <http://www.sawridge.com/about-sawridge-group.aspx>

²⁰ Aboriginal Perspectives, 24.

Discovering the Blackfoot Nation

A trip to the world-class Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park in southern Alberta takes visitors into the past. Modern exhibits tell the story of the Siksika culture through storytelling, video, lighting, sound, and design. Outdoors there are historic sites, including the Last Tipi Site, Chief Crowfoot's final campsite, and Blackfoot Crossing, where Treaty 7 was signed. In the summer, visitors can take in live demonstrations of activities like smoking meat, or spend the night in a tipi.²⁶

Population

Located in the southern part of the province, the three Blackfoot Confederacy nations are all relatively large in terms of population. Piikani First Nation has more than 3,500 members,²¹ Siksika Nation has more than 6,000 members, and Kainai First Nation has more than 11,000 members, making it one of the largest First Nations in Canada. The Blackfeet Nation in northwestern Montana is also large, with more than 16,500 enrolled members.²²

Language Family

The Blackfoot language is part of the Algonquian language family.

Social and Economic Activities

Ranching and farming have long been important economic activities for the Blackfoot, and still are today. These First Nations have also operated other businesses with varying degrees of success, including an operation fabricating jeans.

The Blood Tribe Agricultural Project, a community-owned project on the Kainai reserve, is successful. Established in 1991, it provides water to about 10,000 hectares of farmland and produces hay for export to other countries, including the U.S., Japan, Korea, and the Middle East. The project

provides employment and opportunities for education, training, and mentorship for Kainai First Nation members.²³

As on many reserves, band-owned facilities provide members with necessary services as well as opportunities to engage in traditional practices. For instance, the Siksika Nation has a sportsplex, college, daycare centre, and health and wellness centre as well as an elders' lodge, medicine lodge, men's lodge, and a place for holding powwows.²⁴

Did You Know?

The Blackfoot and Cree were often at war, and although adoptions were common among Plains people, heads turned when the great Siksika Chief Crowfoot adopted a young Cree warrior, Poundmaker, who would later become a famous leader in his own right. Poundmaker reminded Crowfoot's wife of a son the couple had lost, and so they brought him into their family circle. It was an alliance that prevented some bloodshed.

The Blackfoot Confederacy has collaborated with the Government of Alberta on tourism projects such as Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park and Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

²¹ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Registered Population, at http://pse5-esd5.ainc-inac.gc.ca/FNP/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=436&lang=eng, accessed January 10, 2013.

²² Interview with Allan Pard, January 2013.

²³ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 204.

²⁴ "History of Siksika Nation", at <http://siksikanation.com/mainhistory.html>, accessed October 27, 2013.

²⁵ "Blackfoot Indian Fact Sheet", at http://www.bigorin.org/blackfoot_kids.htm, accessed October 27, 2012.

Beverly Hungry Wolf, a Kanai author, renews herself in ceremony every year, on the Mookoanssin (Belly Buttes), a sacred site for her people. She preserves valuable stories of the Buffalo Days, especially those of women, in her books *The Ways of My Grandmothers* and *Daughters of the Buffalo Women*. She also teaches Blackfoot in a Head Start program.

The word “Blackfoot” is the English translation of “siksika”, meaning “black foot.” A version of the origin of the word indicates that it referred to the dark-coloured soles of moccasins the people wore, perhaps because they crossed over land that had been scorched by fire.²⁵

Some Alberta place names that come from the Blackfoot language are:

- Medicine Hat – the translation of *saamis*, which means “medicine”
- Ponoka – Blackfoot for “elk”

Dene

In Alberta, four groups identify as Dene: Dene Suliné, Dene Tha’,

Tsuu T’ina, and Dunne-za. These groups share similar spiritual beliefs and social organization as well as a similar language from the Athapaskan language family, but historically they had differing relationships to the land and are unique from one another as a result.²⁷

The Dene and the Navajo in the southwest U.S. share the same language group.

Dene Suliné

(de-nay-soong-lin-ay)

History

Dene Suliné is the contemporary name for the cultural group formerly identified as the Chipewyan. Their traditional territory was the boreal forest and waters covering a large area in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and northeastern Alberta. Living and migrating in family groups, they hunted caribou, wood buffalo, and waterfowl and caught fish. The Dene Suliné began trading with the Europeans when the Hudson’s Bay Company opened in Fort Churchill.²⁸

Population

The Dene Suliné reside close to the Saskatchewan border. Cold Lake First Nations’ reserve land is located in the Treaty 6 area, 300 kilometres northeast of Edmonton. The registered population is 2,635 (December 2012)²⁹, with about half living on reserve. Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation is in the Treaty 8 area and has a membership of about 800.³⁰ Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation is located in northern Alberta near Lake Athabasca and has a registered population of 1,071 (December 2012).³¹

Social and Economic Activities

Economic activities have changed over time. For example, families on the Cold Lake reserve practised agriculture in the form of cereal crops and cattle production for many years. They had horses and eventually purchased a steam engine and caterpillar to help with farming.³² Today, after a period of high unemployment, they practise some agriculture and the nation owns a number of other businesses including Casino Dene, a forestry product

²⁶ “Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park”, at <http://www.blackfootcrossing.ca>, accessed February 5, 2013.

²⁷ Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada, eCulture, at <http://eculture.pagc.sk.ca/eculture.php?pid=DeneSuliné&tp=slnk&language=&ver=> accessed December 30, 2012.

²⁸ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 25–26.

²⁹ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), Registered Population, at http://pse5-esd5.ainc-inac.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=464&lang=eng, accessed January 10, 2013.

³⁰ AANDC, at http://pse5-esd5.ainc-inac.gc.ca/FNP/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=470&lang=eng, accessed December 30, 2012.

³¹ AANDC, at http://pse5-esd5.ainc-inac.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=463&lang=eng, accessed January 10, 2013.

³² John N.A. Janvier, “The Dene Suliné of Cold Lake–Parchment,” at http://www.cfnf.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=18&Itemid=31, accessed, December 30, 2012.

operation, and the Primco Dene Group of Companies, which services the oil industry.

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation continues to keep the traditional activities of hunting, trapping, gathering, and fishing central to the community's way of life.³³ As of 2006, Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation engaged in some agriculture and manufacturing activities.³⁴

Did You Know?

The Dene Suliné were a matriarchal society at one time, with women playing a central role.³⁵

This culture was well known for art, and it still is. Artist Alex Janvier, the late actor Jimmy Herman, and singer/songwriter Thomas Piche are all Dene Suliné.

The Dene Suliné are working with the University of Alberta on programs to help ensure the language and traditional knowledge is retained, including cultural camps that teach

students trapping, fishing, gardening, and crafts.³⁶

Dene Tha'

(de-nay-thah)

(People Common to the Territory, or Common Peoples)³⁷

History

The contemporary name for the cultural group also known as the Slavey, Dene Tha' means "simple people." Their homeland includes the Caribou Mountains and Hay River regions of Alberta, and the people traditionally went far into the Northwest Territories for hunting. They typically stayed in woodland areas even when caribou could be found in abundance on the barrens, and they were skilled at hunting, trapping, and fishing.

Population

The Dene Tha' live in northwestern Alberta on three reserves: Chateh (Assumption), Meander River, and Bushe River. Approximately 1,800 members live on these Dene Tha' reserves while about 600 live off the reserve.

Social and Economic Activities

The Dene Tha' First Nation, like all other First Nations, takes care of the social needs of nation members. Facilities include a K–12 school, health centre, nursing station, and three public works buildings, one on each reserve. Municipal services provided by the nation include water, sewer, and fire. Social services are also available. These include home care for adults and a children's centre.³⁸

Economic activities include businesses in small engine repair, taxi service, home building, and electrical services. Chateh (Assumption) also benefits economically by the presence of a gas station / food store; a laundromat, bottle depot, and coffee shop; natural gas distribution; and a construction company.³⁹

Did You Know?

Tea dances are still held in the three Dene Tha' communities of Bushe River, Assumption, and Meander River, though not as often as they used to be.

³³ Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, at <http://www.acfn.com/#!about-us/cz60>, accessed December 30, 2012.

³⁴ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC), Workforce Statistics, at http://pse5-esd5.ainc-inac.gc.ca/FNP/Main/Search/FNWorkforce.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=470&lang=eng, accessed December 30, 2012.

³⁵ <http://www.coldlakefirstnations.ca/ecdev/node/15>, accessed December 30, 2012.

³⁶ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 84.

³⁷ Dene Tha', at <http://www.denetha.ca>, accessed December 26, 2012.

³⁸ Dene Tha', at <http://www.denetha.ca>, accessed December 26, 2012.

³⁹ Dene Tha', at <http://www.denetha.ca>, accessed December 26, 2012.

“It’s hard to get people together for a tea dance today,” says artist and spiritual leader Roy Salopree of the Meander River First Nation (part of the Dene Tha Nation). He tells people that the next best thing to having a tea dance is to put tobacco, moose grease, and tea on the fire, as offerings or prayers to the Creator.

Nogha (pronounced No-ah), of northern Alberta, was Ndátin—a Dreamer. Today, few Dene Tha’ are old enough to have seen him lead a tea dance in the 1920s, but most have heard of this legendary spiritual leader. Nogha would call a tea dance, before a moose hunt to ask the Creator for good weather and success in killing animals, and it might also be held after the hunt in thanksgiving. People recall Nogha always urging the people to get up and dance, and to be thankful for what they had, and for each other. “As you leave your footprints in the dirt around the tea dance circle, you are making your trail to heaven,” Nogha would say.



Photograph by Scott Sehested

Tsuu T’ina

(*tsotli’na*) (Earth People)

History

Tsuu T’ina is the contemporary name of the cultural group once known as the Sarcee, a Blackfoot word. They were closely allied with the Blackfoot Confederacy. They are related to the Dunne-za in northern Alberta, but the two groups have lived separately for a long time; they may have split when

the Cree and Nakoda moved into the province. As a result, the languages of the Tsuu T’ina and the Dunne-za are now quite different. Originally the Tsuu T’ina lived in the north, but they later adopted a Blackfoot Plains lifestyle revolving around the buffalo. Today the Tsuu T’ina and the Treaty 7 First Nations have a close relationship.

Population

Tsuu T’ina First Nation has 2,038 registered members (December 2012)⁴¹, most of whom live on the reserve adjacent to Calgary’s southwest border.

Social and Economic Activities

Tsuu T’ina First Nation has taken advantage of the reserve’s urban location to build its economy. The reserve has the usual infrastructure, and also owns a golf course and the highly successful Grey Eagle Casino.

Did You Know?

In a traditional Tsuu T’ina wedding, the boy and girl feed each other berries to represent the boy’s duty to provide and the girl’s duty to feed him. They tie eagle feathers in each other’s hair to acknowledge the eagle will be the guide and protector of their marriage.

⁴¹ AANDC, Registered Population, at http://pse5-esd5.ainc-inac.gc.ca/FNP/Main/Search/FNRegPopulation.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=432&lang=eng, accessed January 10, 2013.

Dunne-za

(*da-nay-za*) (*Pure People*)

History

Dunne-za is the contemporary name of the Beaver people, and the members of the Dunne-za call themselves Chatay or beaver people. They traditionally lived along the Peace River in northern Alberta. Expert hunters and trappers, they lived in small family groups, with group size changing as food supplies changed. These small groups would get together in larger groups for ceremonies and other social events.⁴²

Population and Communities

The Dunne-za reside in northwest Alberta, near the Peace River.

Nakoda

History

The Nakoda have also been referred to as the Stoney, Assiniboine, and Nakota, and Paul First Nation in Alberta prefers the name Stoney.⁴³ Once part of the Yanktonai Sioux, who lived between the Mississippi River and Lake Superior, the Nakoda separated in the early 17th century and moved north. They moved west during the fur trade and later split

into two branches, one of which continued the woodlands lifestyle. Members of the Paul and Alexis Nakota Sioux nations descend from these people. The other group adopted the Plains culture of hunting buffalo, and members of Stoney Nakoda First Nation near Morley are their descendants.⁴⁴

Population

Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation and Paul First Nation are in the Treaty 6 area in the western part of the province. Stoney Nakoda First Nation (which includes the Bearspaw, Chiniki, and Wesley First Nations) is located

Casinos Provide Economic Benefit

Casinos have provided First Nations across Canada and the U.S. with economic benefits that help reduce socio-economic disparities between First Nations and other communities while contributing to the provincial economy. Alberta has five First Nation-owned casinos: Stoney Nakoda Resort and Casino, located between Calgary, Canmore, and Banff; Casino Dene, owned by Cold Lake First Nations; the Eagle River Casino, owned by Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation; the Tsuu T'ina's Grey Eagle Casino in Calgary; and Enoch Cree Nation's River Cree Casino in Edmonton.

The First Nations Development Fund is a provincial government grant program that is supported in part from the revenues from government-owned slot machines in First Nations casinos. First Nations communities can apply to the program for funding for economic, social, and community development projects.

Since its inception in 2005, up to 2013, the First Nations Development Fund has paid out more than \$600 million.⁴⁵

The First Nation casinos also contribute to local economies. They employ hundreds of people throughout the province; purchase various goods and services from local businesses; and partner with

municipalities to provide roads, and utilities services.



⁴² Dunne-za, at <http://knowbc.com/limited/Books/Encyclopedia-of-BC/D/Dunne-za>, accessed August 16, 2013.

⁴³ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, IX.

⁴⁴ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 27.

⁴⁵ Government of Alberta, First Nations Development Fund at <http://www.aboriginal.alberta.ca/895.cfm>.

in Treaty 7, west of Calgary. As of December 2012, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation had 1,796 members, Paul First Nation had 1,989 members, and the Stoney Nakoda First Nation had a population of 5,189.⁴⁶

Language Family

Nakoda is a language in the Siouan language family.

Social and Economic Activities

Like other First Nations cultures, the Nakoda engage in a variety of social and economic activities. For example, a golf course and a gas station / convenience store contribute to the economy of Paul First Nation, while Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation has a store, casino, and gas station and is involved in oilfield service and forestry.⁴⁷

Did You Know?

Among the Sioux, and in other tribes, speech between father-in-law and daughter-in-law, and between mother-in-law and son-in-law was strictly prohibited. Conversation was allowed between the two men and between the two women, but only in the third person plural and in a soft tone of voice, to show respect. They never spoke directly to each other, but always in a roundabout fashion.⁴⁸

The round dance of the Nakoda was once a healing ceremony that evolved into a social occasion. It is said that relatives who have passed away dance with participants of a round dance. The dance itself mimics the movement of the Northern Lights, which the Nakoda believe are the spirits of loved ones who have died.⁴⁹

Anishinabe

(a-nish-na-bay)

History

The Anishinabe or Saulteaux are a branch of the Ojibway nations. They came to Alberta from the Eastern Woodlands, in the Sault Ste. Marie region, in the late 1700s. Originally they settled in Manitoba, eventually moving further west, where their lifestyle changed to one of buffalo hunting.

Population

The Anishinabe population in Alberta is small. O'Chiese First Nation, located in the Treaty 6 area, northwest of Rocky Mountain House is primarily made up of Anishinabe and Cree members and around 1,000 people live on the reserve.

Language Family

Saulteaux is in the Algonquian

language family. About 70 percent of people living on the reserve speak Saulteaux, and most can understand Cree and English. Children learn their traditional language in daycare, in a Head Start program, and in school. Chief and council conduct business in Saulteaux.

Social and Economic Activities

The O'Chiese First Nation has many community resources that benefit members, including a pre-school to Grade 12 school, an adult upgrading program, a daycare, a pool hall, a public works building, a store, a health centre, a dental clinic, and a fire hall. The nation also provides cultural programs, including sun dances and round dances.

To help its members and the community succeed, O'Chiese First Nation offers training opportunities in heavy equipment, management, early childhood development, security, and more.

Leadership has created a business investment centre and established a number of ventures to create economic stability. These include a gas bar, a truck stop, and a sand and gravel company.⁵⁰ The community has also built low-rent

⁴⁶ <http://www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca/acp/community/site.nsf/showresults?openagent>, accessed January 10, 2013.

⁴⁷ Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, at <http://www.alexisnakotasioux.com/default.aspx?ID=5-2>, accessed January 3, 2013.

⁴⁸ Land of the Nakoda, James L. Long, Montana Historical Society and Riverbend Publishing

⁴⁹ Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, at <http://www.alexisnakotasioux.com/default.aspx?ID=3-5>, accessed January 3, 2013.

⁵⁰ "Essential Programs," at [http://www.ochiese.ca/Essential-Programs/](http://www.ochiese.ca/Essential-Programs/http://www.ochiese.ca/Essential-Programs/), accessed December 27, 2012

off-reserve housing in Edmonton and Red Deer for members pursuing post-secondary education.

Did You Know?

There is no word in the traditional Anishinabe language for “saving” because the idea goes against the value of sharing.⁵¹

Aseniwuche Winewak Nation of Canada

(Rocky Mountain People)

Aseniwuche Winewak Nation is not a First Nation under the *Indian Act* but rather a society under the *Provincial Societies Act*. Most of its members are non-status. Many of the people are descendants of Cree people and also of Iroquois people who travelled west with the fur trade.

Their traditional territory covered Jasper north to Grande Prairie and from McBride east to Lac Ste. Anne. In 1907, they were forced to leave the Jasper area when the national park was created.

The people lived a traditional life in the Grande Cache area, providing for themselves through hunting, trapping, and gathering. Life changed when development reached their area in the late 1960s.

In the early 1970s, the Province established co-ops/enterprises to hold land parcels for the use of the descendants of the people who had been forced to leave the Jasper area. Co-operatives and enterprises hold a fee simple title to the parcels of land. They also have legal authority to manage their affairs.

To advance the socioeconomic circumstances of the people and deal with the challenges that continued to be created by development, including the impacts on their traditional lifestyle, the six co-ops and enterprises joined as Aseniwuche Winewak Nation, a representative body, in 1994.

Tommy Wanyandie is a guide and outfitter in the areas around



Tommy Wanyandie⁵²
(Photograph by Dianne Meili)

Grande Cache, Hinton, and the Willmore Wilderness backcountry. His knowledge is of great value to the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation of Canada because he can point out graves and old camps of Aboriginal people that mark traditional land requiring protection from industrial development.



⁵¹ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 75.

⁵² Meili, Dianne. *Those Who Know: Profiles of Alberta's Aboriginal Elders, Landmark Edition*. (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2012).

Chapter 8

First Nations Historical Context



1763 – Royal Proclamation

The King of England acknowledges that indigenous people have Aboriginal title over their land, recognizes them as nations, and declares a special relationship between First Nations and the Crown. The proclamation forms the basis for the numbered treaties and the reserve system.

1867 – British North America Act

Canada's original constitution, the *British North America Act* establishes Canada's jurisdiction over First Nations and the land reserved for them.

1879 – Davin Report

At the request of the federal government, Nicholas Flood Davin studies and reports on how the United States educates Native American children. The report recommends removing First Nations children from their families and sending them to residential schools in order to assimilate them. Attendance

is made compulsory. By the 1930s, there are 80 schools across the country.

1960 – First Nations Vote

The federal government gives First Nations peoples the right to vote in federal elections. Alberta gives First Nations peoples the right to vote in provincial elections in 1964.

1969 – White Paper

The federal government announced a shift in policy direction that would have eliminated Indian status and the Department of Indian Affairs and would have given the provinces responsibility for First Nations. First Nations viewed the plan as a way for the federal government to stop fulfilling its treaty obligations. The White Paper was withdrawn.

1969 – Removal of Indian Agents

For the first time, First Nations peoples are not living under Indian agent control.

1969 – The Unjust Society

Albertan and Cree activist Harold Cardinal responds to the white paper with a book that mobilizes First Nations to take action and plays a role in the government's eventual withdrawal of the paper.

1970 – Citizen Plus (Red Paper)

The Indian Association of Alberta issues a detailed response to the white paper. The white paper is formally withdrawn.

1972 – Indian Control of Indian Education

The National Indian Brotherhood issues a policy statement that recommends restructuring First Nations education around parental responsibility and local control. The federal government responds positively, and by 1975, 10 First Nations across Canada are operating their own schools.

1982 – Constitution Act

Section 35 of the act defines who Aboriginal peoples are, recognizes Indian, Inuit Métis as Aboriginal peoples; and recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights.

1985 – Bill C-31

Important changes were made to Canada's *Indian Act* on June 28, 1985, when Parliament passed Bill C-31, *an Act to Amend the Indian Act*. Bill C-31 brought the act into line with the provisions of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The three principles that guided the amendments to the *Indian Act* were:

- removal of discrimination;
- restoring status and membership rights; and
- increasing control of Indian bands over their own affairs.

1996 – Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

The report examines the social, cultural, and economic challenges Canada's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples face and recommends far-reaching change.

2000 – Strengthening Relationships, the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework

The first of its kind in Canada, the framework sets out the basic structure for Alberta government policies that address the needs of Aboriginal peoples in Alberta. It emphasizes well-being, self-reliance, effective consultation regarding resource and economic development, partnerships, and the clarification of roles and responsibilities.

2006 – Alberta's First Nations Consultation Guidelines on Land Management and Resource Development (revised 2007)

First Nations and industry stakeholders are involved in creating guidelines for consultation. Alberta also creates the Aboriginal Consultation Coordination Group to ensure consistency on consultation issues and initiatives across government departments, as required by the province's First Nations Consultation Policy on Land Management and Resource Development, released in 2005.

2008 – Protocol Agreement on Government to Government Relations

Signed by the premier, the minister of Aboriginal Relations, and the Grand Chiefs and Vice-Chiefs of Treaties 6, 7, and 8, the agreement provides a framework for collaboration between First Nations and the Government of Alberta. The Grand Chiefs and the premier meet at least once a year, and the grand chiefs and ministers meet at least twice a year.

2010 – Memorandum of Understanding for First Nations Education in Alberta

Signed by the Government of Canada, the Government of Alberta, and the Assembly of Treaty Chiefs in Alberta, the MOU "provides a common vision for strengthening learning and educational success for First Nations learners in Alberta. The MOU provides a framework for collaboration to support a range of education-related issues including parental and community engagement, treaty and cultural awareness, and ongoing work on tuition and education service agreements."⁵³

Chapter 9

Métis People

This proud Aboriginal group has a foot in both the Aboriginal and European worlds, and a distinct identity recognized under the Constitution of Canada. Skilled voyageurs, buffalo hunters, traders, and interpreters, the adaptable Métis helped shape Canada, especially the prairie provinces, as the West was developed. Some Métis have French ancestry while others are descended from Scottish or English Hudson's Bay Company employees.⁵⁴

As the only province in Canada to grant the Métis a land base, Alberta shares a unique relationship with these proud Aboriginal peoples. The Métis, with their colourful history and culture, strong sense of entrepreneurship, and willingness to actively participate in politics, add to the mosaic of the province.

History

A mixture of two very different peoples, the first Métis were born in eastern Canada as early as the 1600s, the children of European fishermen and their Aboriginal wives. Their understanding of both societies helped bridge cultural gaps, placing them as integral players in the fur trade. They spoke European and First Nations languages and had the knowledge to take European ideas and make them work in a wilderness landscape, creating, for example, the Red River Cart, which allowed fur traders to move large amounts

of freight product across the country.

In 1869, about 8,000 Métis people lived in the Red River valley in what is now Manitoba but was then Rupert's Land, a territory owned by the Hudson's Bay Company. Many were involved in the fur trade and agriculture, and the buffalo hunt was very important to them.

When Canada took over the area and Europeans began settling the region, the Métis lost the land they had called their own for many years. After they moved west and again found their borders encroached, Métis leader Louis Riel helped petition the government to secure land, but Ottawa dragged its feet. Riel's followers and the government clashed, resulting in the famous and final Battle at Batoche.

Riel surrendered his freedom and was charged with high treason, found guilty, and sentenced to hang in November of 1885.

As time passed, Métis people here in Alberta established communities where they engaged in their traditional activities of farming and hunting buffalo.⁵⁵ St. Albert, Lac Ste. Anne, and Lac La Biche are three such settlements. In these new communities, they laid out farms just as they did in the Red River valley, in narrow strips that ended at the river.

After the resistance, the Métis were politically neglected. Allowed to squat on strips of Crown land alongside roads or on the outskirts of town, they supported themselves by hunting, trapping, or working for wages. Métis people who chose to live on road allowances were referred to as "road allowance people."



⁵⁴ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 59.

⁵⁵ Kainai Board of Education, Métis Nation of Alberta, Northland School Division, Tribal Chiefs Institute of Treaty Six, *Aboriginal Studies 20: Peoples and Cultural Change* (Edmonton, Duval House Publishing Inc., 2005), 84.

“This matter of provision for our Métis people and justice for their dependents; that is an objective toward which we must strive and from which there must be no retreat.”

Malcolm Norris

Establishing a Métis Land Base in Alberta

In 1928, Métis people in Alberta began to organize politically, forming associations. In 1932, James P. Brady, Malcolm Norris, Peter Tomkins Jr., Joseph Dion, and Felix Calliou created, L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest to lobby for social and economic improvements and a land base.

The Alberta Legislature resolved to investigate the conditions Alberta Métis were experiencing and established the Ewing Commission in 1934. The report, tabled in 1936, recommended establishing agricultural settlements on provincial Crown land for the Métis people to use.

In 1938, the provincial government passed the *Metis Population Betterment Act*. Written by the Government of Alberta in consultation with people in the Métis Association of Alberta, it set aside settlements for Métis people and made Alberta the first province to enact legislation specific to Métis people.

In 1975, the Alberta Federation of Métis Settlements Associations was formed. Its role was to represent the interests of the settlements, and it argued that Métis people had the right to self-determination. The organization also gave settlement councils a way to share information, coordinate efforts, and develop policies on matters requiring co-operation.

The settlements were located on provincial Crown-owned land at this time. But the Métis people wanted their own land base and continued to lobby for their interests. A historic package of proposed legislation, the Alberta-Metis Settlements Accord, was signed in 1989, followed the next year by legislation. It led to a governance framework for the settlements that included councils in each settlement and an overarching body called the Metis Settlements General Council (MSGC) that would represent the settlements collectively. The government transferred the settlement land to the Metis Settlements General Council.⁵⁶

L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest eventually became the Métis Nation of Alberta Association. Adding the word “nation” reflected the people’s understanding that they had been recognized as such.⁵⁷ Today the Métis Nation of Alberta Association includes Métis members who may or may not be members on the Métis Settlements.

As of 2012, Métis Settlements with their governments are unique to Alberta. Eight settlements covering 512,121 hectares (1.25 million acres) of land in northern Alberta give Métis people a land base, autonomy at a local level, and self-sufficiency.

NOTE: The accent on the word "Métis" is used in all cases, except when referring to the Metis Settlements' legislation, regulations, or entities established by the legislation.

⁵⁶ Kainavignal Studies 20: Peoples and Cultural Change (Edmonton, Duval House Publishing Inc., 2005), 127.
⁵⁷ Peoples and Culture Change, 127.

Around 5,000 people live in the settlements of Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie, and Peavine. This is a small portion of the more than 96,000 Métis people living in Alberta.

Buffalo Lake

Buffalo Lake is located 50 kilometres southwest of Lac La Biche and has a population of 701 people.⁵⁸ Economic development activities include: oil and gas, logging, and construction of local infrastructure projects such as new roads and houses through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity.

East Prairie

East Prairie is located 40 kilometres southeast of High Prairie and has a population of 345 people. Economic development activities include: forestry, construction, and transportation.



*Albert and Alma Desjarlais
(Photograph by Dianne Meili)*

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is located just south of Cold Lake and has a population of 671 people. Economic development activities include oil and gas, and construction.

Fishing Lake

Fishing Lake is located 93 kilometres from Cold Lake and has a population of 425 people. Economic development activities include oil and gas, cattle farming, tourism, mining, transportation, and outdoor recreation.

Gift Lake

Gift Lake is located 40 kilometres northeast of High Prairie and has a population of 791 people. Economic development activities include forestry, oil and gas, construction, transportation, and outdoor recreation.

Kikino

Kikino is located 80 kilometres south of Lac La Biche and has a population of 810 people. Economic development activities include oil and gas, forestry, construction, ranching, and tourism.

Always open to anyone wanting to learn Cree culture and spirituality, Albert and Alma Desjarlais host an annual summer camp on their East Prairie Métis Settlement property. The many Aboriginal foster children who attend make fish scale art, learn to moose-call, and play handgames. The camps culminate in a sweatlodge ceremony.

⁵⁸ Population figures are taken from the 2012 Census.



Randy Hardy⁶¹
(Photograph provided by
Métis Settlements General
Council)

“A land base is the foundation upon which we build self-government and exercise our right to self-determination,” says Randy Hardy, president of the Métis Settlements General Council. “It is fundamental to protecting and enhancing Métis culture.”

Paddle Prairie

Paddle Prairie is located 77 kilometres south of High Level and has a population of 464 people. Economic development activities include oil and gas, agriculture, transportation, construction, and outdoor recreation.

Peavine

Peavine is located 56 kilometres north of High Prairie and has a population of 651 people. Economic development activities include oil and gas, agriculture, transportation, construction, and outdoor recreation.

Moving Forward

Today, the Metis Settlements General Council (MSGC) continues to represent the interests of the settlements. The general council consists of all councillors of the eight Métis Settlements and the offices of the General Council. The elected officers include the president and vice president, secretary and treasurer. A political and administrative body, the MSGC develops and implements programs and services to the settlements. It has law-making authority over membership, hunting, fishing, trapping, and land-related matters.⁵⁹ When the MSGC passes a law, it is just as if the province has passed the law.⁶⁰

An elected five-person council consisting of a chairman and four councillors, elected by settlement members, governs each settlement. The councils provide a wide range of services from public works, emergency services, health services, and road services to social development programs, recreational services, and training. The settlements have statutory authority similar to local governments.

The Métis Nation of Alberta Association

The Métis Nation of Alberta Association (MNAA) continues to be an important political organization and has grown from a small organization to one with a membership of approximately 35,000. This provincial organization is an active participant in government policy and decision-making.

The MNAA promotes and facilitates the advancement of Métis people through the pursuit of self-reliance, self-determination and self-management. It also works to ensure the social and economic well-being of Métis people in Alberta.

The MNAA is governed by a 14-member provincial council comprised of:

- A provincially elected President and vice president

⁵⁹ Métis Settlements General Council (MSGC), “About Us”, at <http://www.msgc.ca/About+Us/Default.ksi>, accessed January 3, 2013.

⁶⁰ MSGC, “About Us”, at <http://www.msgc.ca/About+Us/Default.ksi>, accessed January 3, 2013.

⁶¹ Randy Hardy interview, July 2013.

- The six MNAA Regions' presidents and vice-presidents, who are elected by the region members. The six MNAA regions cover the province of Alberta.

Métis Organizations Across Alberta

Tens of thousands of Métis people live in Alberta's urban centres. Some of the organizations that have developed in these areas are:

- The Métis Urban Housing Corporation: Owned by the Métis Nation of Alberta, it provides affordable housing for Métis people and other Aboriginal people who have low to moderate incomes, with a focus on supporting families first.
- Apeetogosan (Métis) Development Inc.: Entrepreneurs with great ideas and a need for financing can come here for small business loans, support services, and business advice to turn their dreams into a reality.
- Rupertsland Institute Métis Centre of Excellence: An affiliate of the Métis Nation of Alberta, the institute undertakes education, training, and research. One of its best-known programs is the Métis Training to Employment Program, which delivers services to people across the province through a network of offices and mobile units.

Languages

Many Métis speak Cree. The Métis Nation of Alberta actively promotes the preservation of the Michif language, a combination of Cree nouns and French verbs developed by the Métis.⁶²

Did You Know?

Sashes are an important part of Métis identity and are worn by all ages and both genders.⁶³ Historically, the sash identified the wearer as Métis and could be used for practical purposes when needed, like a scarf to hold heavy items, or as rope, wash cloth, a saddle blanket when needed. Today it's a symbol of connectedness, with the woven fabric representing how the lives of the Métis have been woven from various cultures. Like the Métis people, the sash is a mixture of elements that, taken together, are an integrated whole and a rich tapestry.⁶⁴

Common Métis surnames you might hear in Alberta include Belcourt, Cunningham, Thompson, Letendre, Dumont, L'Hirondelle, Racine, and Delorme.

⁶² The Métis Nation of Alberta, "Michif – Language of the Métis," at <http://www.albertaMétis.com/MNAHome/MNA-Culture2/Michif.aspx>, accessed August 16, 2013.

⁶³ The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, "Our Proud Heritage," at <http://www.Métismuseum.ca/exhibits/heritage/>, accessed January 3, 2013.

⁶⁴ The Métis Nation of Alberta, "The Métis Sash," at <http://www.msgc.ca/Resources/The+Métis+Sash/Default.ksi>, accessed February 4, 2013.

⁶⁵ The Métis Nation of Alberta, "The Métis Sash," at <http://www.albertaMétis.com/MNAHome/MNA-Culture2/MNA-Culture-Cultural.aspx>, accessed February 4, 2013.



The Métis Flag

The Métis flag was first used in 1816 in the Battle of Seven Oaks. Bearing an infinity symbol, it is a symbol of a culture that brings together Aboriginal and European cultures. There are two versions: blue and white, and red and white.

Blue may have been chosen because blue and white were the colours of the North West Company, for which many French, Michif-speaking Métis worked. Blue and white are also the traditional colours of French Canada, and the flag resembles Scotland's flag.

It is thought that the red flag may have begun with Hudson's Bay Company employees because red and white were the colours of the HBC.⁶⁵

The infinity symbol represents the coming together of two distinct cultures.



Métis Historical Context

1869 – Red River Resistance

Métis people assert their rights, forming a provisional government after Canada buys their territory in the Red River valley from the Hudson's Bay Company and claims authority over them.

1870 – Manitoba Act

The province of Manitoba is created. The act sets aside land for Métis people. Unable to secure a land base, many Métis people leave Red River and move into Saskatchewan and Alberta.

1885 – Resistance

The government fails to respond to petitions for title to land and the Métis people declare a provisional government, led by Louis Riel, at Batoche. First Nations join the resistance. Canadian troops defeat the resistance and leaders are sent to prison for treason. Riel is executed.

1928 – Métis began to organize themselves politically in Alberta.

1932 – Malcolm Norris, Jim Brady, Peter Tomkins, Joseph Dion and Felix Calliou organized L'Association des Métis d'Alberta et les Territoires du Nord-Ouest. Its purpose was to lobby for improved social and economic conditions and a land base for Alberta Métis.

1938 – Metis Population Betterment Act

Based on the 1936 recommendations of the Ewing Commission, Alberta passed the act. This act set aside colonies for Métis people. Alberta became the first province in Canada to enact legislation specific to Métis.

1982 – Constitution Act

Section 35 of the act defines who Aboriginal peoples are, recognizes Indian, Inuit, and Métis as Aboriginal peoples; and recognizes and affirms existing Aboriginal and treaty rights.

1987 – Framework Agreement

The Government of Alberta and the Métis Nation of Alberta Association sign an agreement that is the first of a series of agreements to promote the advancement of Métis people.

1990 – Metis Settlements Act

"The act establishes a governance system for the Métis Settlements. Title to about half a million hectares of land is transferred to the residents of eight Métis Settlements in north-central Alberta."⁶⁶ In addition to the *Metis Settlements Act*, other pieces of legislation were passed. The *Constitution of Alberta Amendment Act*, 1990, provides that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta cannot make a law without the agreement of the Metis Settlements General Council that would:

- amend or repeal the *Metis Settlements Land Protection Act*,
- alter or revoke the grant of the Settlement lands to the Metis Settlements General Council, or
- dissolve the Metis Settlements General Council (or result in its being composed of persons who are not settlement members).

The *Metis Settlement Land Protection Act* ratifies the grant of lands to the Metis Settlements General Council and lays out a process to be followed if the General Council ever wants to sell any of the settlement lands. It

also provides that settlement lands cannot be used as security and establishes processes for the Crown to acquire interests in settlement lands for public purposes. It also has provisions requiring the consent of the settlement council and the General Council for people to enter settlements to explore and develop minerals.

The *Métis Settlement Accord Land Implementation Act* was passed to establish funding provisions to facilitate the transition from the old legislation dealing with the settlements to the new legislation.

1992 – Tripartite Agreement

The Governments of Alberta and Canada participate in a tripartite process with the Métis Nation of Alberta Association (MNAA). The partners work together to:

- Create economic opportunities and promote well-being for Métis people and communities in Alberta.
- Identify mutual priorities.
- Discuss issues of common interest.
- Convey practical solutions to issues facing Métis Albertans.

1996 – Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

The report examines the social, cultural, and economic challenges

Canada's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples face and recommends far-reaching change.

2000 – Strengthening Relationships, the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework

The first of its kind in Canada, the framework sets out the basic structure for Alberta government policies that address the needs of Aboriginal peoples in Alberta. It emphasizes well-being, self-reliance, effective consultation regarding resource and economic development, partnerships, and the clarification of roles and responsibilities.

2003 – R. v. Powley

The Powley decision was rendered by the Supreme Court of Canada. Two Métis men, Steve and Roddy Powley, killed a moose in 1993 and were charged with contravening Ontario hunting law. The men argued that section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* protects the right of Métis to hunt for food. The case was appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled in favour of the Powleys. In an unanimous judgment, the Supreme Court ruled that Métis who meet certain criteria have constitutionally protected Aboriginal rights (such as the right to hunt or food). This decision is the landmark Métis rights decision in Canadian law.

2008 – Alberta/Métis Nation of Alberta Association Framework Agreement

This seven-year agreement aims to promote Métis economic and community well-being, improve input for Métis people into public policy development in Alberta, and improve Métis access to provincial services. It encourages sub-agreements between the Métis Nation of Alberta and other provincial ministries. A framework funding agreement is also in place.

2013 – Daniels v. Canada

The federal trial court case found in 2013, that Métis and non-Status First Nations people are "Indians" under *the Constitution Act, 1867*. In the same year, the case was appealed to the Federal Court of Appeal.

2013 Long-term Arrangements

Signed between the Alberta Government and the Metis Settlements General Council, it provides Alberta's eight Metis Settlements with resources to build stronger and self-sustaining communities. The 10-year agreement is to strengthen the Settlements' local governments and accountability; increase education, employment and economic opportunities; and improve infrastructure and essential services.

Chapter 10

Inuit

Larga Edmonton

When people living in Canada's north need specialized medical care, they often have to travel to large urban centres like Edmonton. Larga Edmonton is a residential facility that provides Inuit patients with a home away from home, even providing meals with familiar food like caribou and arctic char. Many staff members come from the north or have at least lived there and understand the culture, traditions, language, and people. Larga Edmonton is owned by Kitikmeot Corporation and Nunasi Corporation, both of which are 100 percent Inuit-owned. Larga also helps First Nations and non-status residents of the Northwest Territories.

Alberta has a small Inuit population that comprises Inuit who have left their northern homes to live south of Latitude 60. Inuit peoples are distinct from other Aboriginal peoples and understanding their heritage is important in developing a better understanding of all of Alberta's Aboriginal peoples.

History

Inuit peoples made the Arctic their home, managing the challenges of the climate—long periods of darkness; blizzards, snow and ice, little vegetation—in innovative ways. For example, they protected themselves with insulated, waterproof clothing made of animal skins and furs and built homes out of snow and ice or from earth, driftwood, moss, bone, skins, and rock.⁶⁷

Family is important. Inuit peoples lived in small family groups that joined in camps that varied in size with the seasons. Most camps had 30 to 50 people, the perfect amount to monitor the many breathing holes in the ice that might yield a nutritious seal in the winter.⁶⁸

Population and Communities

Inuit communities are found in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, northern Quebec, and Labrador, with only about

10 percent of the population living outside the Arctic. Most of those who leave the Arctic choose to move to urban centres like Edmonton.⁶⁹ In 2011, there were 1,985 Inuit people living in Alberta.

Language

Inuit speak Inuktitut. The language is expected to endure, as most people who speak it live in traditional territories that haven't attracted settlers and haven't been as affected by outside influences.⁷⁰

Social and Economic Development

Historically, Inuit people lived off the land. In the mid-1950s, mining projects and other changes resulted in the federal government trying to promote earning wages by providing opportunities for education and training and incentives for economic development, including co-operatives and credit unions. Co-ops were developed to promote tourism, soapstone carving and printmaking, and many other artistic endeavours. Radio and television broadcasting also offered opportunities; in 1972, about 16 percent of broadcasts in the north were in Inuktitut.

Many Inuit people living in Alberta today came here for education and economic opportunities. They earn their living in a broad range of industries and jobs.

⁶⁷ *Aboriginal Perspectives*.

⁶⁸ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 127.

⁶⁹ Kainai Board of Education, Métis Nation of Alberta, Northland School Division, Tribal Chiefs Institute of Treaty Six, *Aboriginal Studies 30: Contemporary Issues* (Edmonton, Duval House Publishing Inc., 2005), 188.

⁷⁰ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 83.

Governance

Traditionally, most Inuit groups were led by an *isumataq*, “one who thinks.” People chose to follow the *isumataq* if they thought he was a good hunter, decision-maker, and role model, and they were free to ignore his advice.⁷¹

Inuit people did not sign treaties with the Crown and were originally not included in the *Indian Act*. They were added to the act in 1924, and the federal government took responsibility for administering programs and services for the Inuit people.

In the 1930s, declining numbers of game animals resulted in many communities facing starvation. The government instituted a relocation program, moving Inuit peoples to permanent communities where they could access government services. But relocation brought its own hardships. For example, some communities were moved to areas where they could no longer hunt and trap in the winter because of the area’s ice patterns. The program was discontinued in the late 1970s.⁷²

Inuit people gained the right to vote in 1950. One year later, they were excluded from the provisions of the *Indian Act*. Self-determination is important to the Inuit, just as it is for other Aboriginal peoples. When the territory of Nunavut was created in 1999, the Inuit people gained the right to be major participants in how the territory is governed. Today, the territorial government is a public government in which anyone can hold office but, because the majority of the population is Inuit, it gives Inuit people more control.⁷³

A consensus style of government is used in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut. This is a unique form of government in Canada—only one other legislature uses consensus, and all others use the party system.

The consensus system differs from the party system in many ways. For example, MLAs are elected as independents instead of being aligned with a party, and all legislative members choose the premier and cabinet ministers. In most cases, a majority vote is required rather than unanimous agreement.⁷⁴

Did You Know?

Inuit people traditionally used songs to transfer knowledge and songs remain important today.⁷⁵ Storytelling also continues.

Inuksuk, which means “to act similar to that of a human”, are stone figures that served as landmarks for hunters and to scare caribou into running straight for the real hunters.⁷⁶

Nunavut’s flag features an inuksuk and the *Niqirtsuituq*, or North Star, which is used to navigate. The North Star symbolizes the leadership of community elders.



⁷¹ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 126.

⁷² *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 174–175.

⁷³ *Contemporary Issues*, 153.

⁷⁴ “Fact Sheet: Consensus Government in Nunavut,” at <http://www.assembly.nu.ca/sites/default/files/Consensus%20Government%20in%20Nunavut%20-%20English.pdf>, accessed January 4, 2013.

⁷⁵ *Aboriginal Perspectives*, 93.

⁷⁶ Inuit Art Gallery, “History of Inuksuit,” at <http://www.arcticinuksuk.com/index.php/history-of-inuksuit>, accessed January 4, 2013.

Chapter 11

Urban Communities

It's a common dilemma if you're Aboriginal and living on a reserve or settlement: you want to be close to family and your culture, but education, employment, and training call you to the city. In 2011, 43 percent of Alberta's Aboriginal population lived in Edmonton and Calgary.⁷⁷

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people abound in Alberta's urban centres, working in a broad range of careers. To maintain a cultural connection and share traditional values with others of like mind, many belong to organizations like friendship centres, cultural societies, and elder's centres.

Moving to the city can be a challenge, and as statistics show, the unemployment rate for First Nations living in urban areas across Canada is five to six times higher than that for non-Aboriginal people in the same area. The experience of losing community and the support of social ties can make the experience stressful and unrewarding. On more isolated reserves or settlements, education and training may be unattainable, and Aboriginal people face discrimination and differing values and expectations. Poverty is widespread among urban Aboriginal people, and statistically, a larger percentage of Aboriginal people off

reserve are below the poverty line compared to non-Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal people living in cities face racism and discrimination, which can negatively affect them in many ways, including making it difficult to get a job and diminishing self-esteem and confidence. On top of this, they can feel alienated living among people who do not share their culture and values.

But others, like Angela Gladue, from Frog Lake First Nation, easily transitions from rural to urban, and from traditional to contemporary ways of being. This B-girl, hip-hop dance teacher and performer, who



Lewis Cardinal

"Learning to live and be in a new land, that's what the urban indigenous experience is about. In our collective histories, we have many stories and memories about arriving at new places

and learning to adapt and understand the new environment. Hunting traditions had to change. New ceremonies needed to be created to commune and live in harmony with the spirit of these new places and the challenges naturally posed by the times. Change is the constant in nature.

Just look to the red-tailed hawk. Today we see them proliferating in the urban centre, using light standards as hunting observatories, using buildings to build nests and raise their young. They have adapted to their new conditions; however, they are still red-tailed hawks. Their spirit is intact, and their way of being is still what moves them.

We too, as indigenous people, are faced with the new land called cities and the challenges of the times that come along with them. We are adapting, understanding, watching, learning, and growing without losing who we are. In times past we may have left our canoes for the plains, and in today's reality the bush for the cities, but we bring with us the stories, ceremonies, and traditions that still make us who we are and tell us what we must do. As with any nation before us who crossed great divides, discovered new places and homes, and learned to speak with the spirit of the land, it took time to make the shift. And when we did, we prospered."⁷⁸



Angela Gladue
(Photograph by Brad Crowfoot)

also dances fancy shawl on the powwow trail, says she is a modern-day warrior. “An elder once told me, to live in this modern society and uphold our Native culture, it’s like walking with a moccasin on one foot and a Nike shoe on the other. I choose to showcase this idea through the blending of my art styles and sharing this perspective with others.” She loves to mix powwow steps with her “top rock” before she hits the ground in B-girling, and just as seamlessly throws hip-hop moves into her traditional dance.

Friendship Centres

Friendship centres began in the 1950s, often in people’s homes, to connect Aboriginal people new to the city to resources and services. In 1970, the

Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association became the first provincial/territorial association to be incorporated. Today there are 20 friendship centres in Alberta.

The Canadian Native Friendship Centre in Edmonton is one example. Founded in 1962, this centre provides culturally sensitive programs and services and referrals to services to about 30,000 people each year.

A primary role of the friendship centre is to provide people with a connection to their culture and heritage. For example, Edmonton’s Canadian Native Friendship Centre offers powwow nights, traditional teachings, Cree language class, and other recreational and cultural programs.

“The city actually brought me back to my culture. I was 12 years old when I saw B-boys and B-girls. The Red Power Squad eventually let me travel and perform with them. A powwow dancer always opened our shows, and he would educate and inspire me, and give me teachings about the medicine wheel and Aboriginal values.”

Urban Aboriginal Populations (2011)

	Métis	First Nation	Inuit
Edmonton CMA	31,780	26,950	1,115
Calgary CMA	17,040	14,630	240

2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada)

Chapter 12

Reserves and Settlements



Vincent Steinhauer
(Photograph from Turtle Lodge,
Manitoba)

“Bring your feast kit to Culture Camp—that’s plates, bowls, and cups for the food we’ll share while in ceremony,” says Blue Quills First Nations College President Vincent Steinhauer, who has been organizing the week-long gathering for 10 years. “The elders, ceremonial leaders, and helpers realize many people are attending these ceremonies for the first time and are very gentle—it’s a safe and comfortable place to experience ceremony.”


The best way to understand what life is like on a First Nations reserve or Métis settlement is to visit one. The people living there are mostly Aboriginal (some non-Aboriginal people may have married into the community), and families are involved in everything from farming, ranching, and teaching school to home craft businesses, trucking firms, and fashion design. You’ll find a range of amenities like schools, churches, stores, health centres, radio stations, water treatment plants, sports facilities, and community centres, depending on which community you visit.

Some First Nations reserves are within or near urban centres, but most are rural. Tsuu T’ina First Nation is right on Calgary’s doorstep, and band members may live on the reserve but spend their working hours in a downtown skyscraper. Conversely,

Fox Lake, a member of Little Red First Nation, is an isolated community in northeastern Alberta where everyone—even small children—still speaks Cree, moose and buffalo are important sources of food, and the back-breaking process of hide tanning the old way is still carried out.

All of Alberta’s Métis Settlements are located in rural areas some distance from large cities.

Life in one community differs from life in any other due to location, culture, economic development, politics, social issues, services, size, and a host of other factors. Some individuals stay in the community while others choose to leave, temporarily or permanently. Reasons for leaving include access to opportunities, including education and jobs, and the desire for an urban lifestyle.



Living in a First Nations, Métis, or non-status community allows people to be close to family and friends and to live surrounded by their own culture. There are opportunities for hunting, fishing, and trapping, and for choosing a more traditional way of life and living according to traditional values.

Ceremonies and traditional activities are an important part of life in Aboriginal communities. Though the aforementioned Tsuu T'ina First Nation may be close to Calgary, many yards hold sweat lodges, and the sun dance ceremony has been revived there since 2000. Ceremonies are held for various reasons, and it's best to speak with an elder or ceremonial leader to learn more about each one. An excellent entry into ceremony is Culture Camp, held the last week in May every year at

Blue Quills First Nations College, just west of St. Paul. Four ceremonies are held through the week: the Chicken Dance, Horse Dance, Night Lodge, and Bear Ceremony. During the day, participants can attend sessions that explain each ceremony and the protocols surrounding it. Horse and wagon rides and arts and crafts round out the day. Families are invited to attend, and camping areas are available.

Ceremonies are integral to the fabric of many First Nations and Métis Settlements, meant to strengthen ties to the Creator, spirit world, and each other. During the winter, round dances are held across Alberta. Some are held to remember loved ones who have passed on, while others are celebrations of kinship and gratitude.



Chapter 13

Common Phrases in Aboriginal Languages

Cree⁷⁹

tân'si	hello
tawaw	welcome
ikosi	goodbye

Siksika⁸⁰

óki	hello
Tsániitá'piiwa?	How are things?
saa	no

Dene⁸¹

Hoꞵu anejál	Good job!
ts'êthié	take it easy; be cautious
Dene t'á edlahodí á?	How do you say it in Dene?

Nakoda⁸²

āba watΘéč	good day (also: hello)
Do'kéd yau? hwo?	How are you?
ǔécā p'fac	I am sorry.

Michif⁸³

tawnshi	hello
tawnshi kiya mataen	good morning

⁷⁹ http://www.miyoc.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=86&Itemid=115, accessed January 4, 2013.

⁸⁰ Donald G. Frant and Norma Jean Russell. Blackfoot Dictionary of Stems, Roots, and Affixes, at <http://www.angelfire.com/ar/waakomimm/lang15.html>, accessed January 7, 2013.

⁸¹ First Voices, "Dene Language Learning Phrases Phrase Book," at <http://www.firstvoices.com/en/Dene/phrase-book/276a626f90058910/Language-learning-phrases>, accessed January 7, 2013.

⁸² Rocky Mountain Nakoda, "Greetings and Phrases," at <http://www.rockymountainnakoda.com/language/Greetings%20%26%20Phrases>, accessed January 7, 2013.

⁸³ Canadian Heritage, "Start Speaking Michif," at <http://www.learnmichif.com/language/greetings>, accessed January 4, 2013.

Chapter 14

Aboriginal Youth

If the future of a country is its youth, then Canada's—and Alberta's—future is increasingly Aboriginal. Canada's Aboriginal youth population is growing at three times the national average.

In 2011 in Alberta, the median age was 25.3. (The median age for the non-Aboriginal population was 36.8.) In the Métis Settlement of Peavine, 41 percent of residents were under 19 in 2012.⁸⁴ Among First Nations, 33.7 percent of the population was under 15 in 2011 and 53.4 percent was under 25. This trend is expected to continue, and that presents opportunities for Aboriginal youth.

The demographically driven labour shortage that is being and will continue to be experienced in Alberta and across the country is predicted to be a major opportunity for Aboriginal youth.

Additionally, because they make up such a large proportion of the population in Aboriginal communities, youth will have opportunities related to leading community and economic development.

Dancer Angela Gladue (featured in Chapter Eleven: Urban Communities) is returning to university at the age of 28 to study social work, understanding that she will be a much more credible counsellor using hip-hop dance to work with at-risk youth when she has a diploma or degree. Education will continue to be important in the coming years. Although Aboriginal youth are typically less likely to graduate high school than non-Aboriginal youth due to the factors discussed earlier, many are excited about the opportunity to get a higher level of education and take advantage of future jobs.



*Roseanne Supernault
(Photograph by Thosophy
Photography)*

An actress in the critically acclaimed television drama *Blackstone*, portraying life on a fictional First Nations reserve, Roseanne Supernault exemplifies youthful exuberance in Alberta. Born on the East Prairie Métis Settlement, she has been on film sets since she was 15 and has walked red carpets at film premieres around the world.

She loves the camera, but her passion is showing youth their potential. She's masterminded NextGen acting workshops, not only to teach the craft of acting, but to help young people (and old) discover their potential in candid, soul-searching workshop exercises.

"We've been through so much as a people. I want to help awaken that storytelling spirit that's been lying dormant inside of each and every one of us," Roseanne says.

Alberta's Young Aboriginal Population (2011)

	First Nations	Métis	Inuit
Total population	116,670	96,870	1,985
0–14	39,350	25,155	500
15–24	22,935	18,290	490

2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada)

⁸⁴ Western Economic Diversification, Government of Canada, "Metis Settlements General Council," at http://www.wd.gc.ca/eng/77_10395.asp, accessed January 5, 2013.



Alberta's Future Leaders

Alberta's Future Leaders is a sports, recreation, arts, and leadership program for Aboriginal youth that provides healthy recreation opportunities so they can develop life and leadership skills. The program is offered in First Nations and Métis communities across the province and funded by government, corporations, and service agencies.

Skills learned in the program include teamwork, leadership, conflict resolution, and co-operation. Improved self-confidence, higher levels of motivation, and improved thinking skills also benefit youth.

Aboriginal Youth Initiative

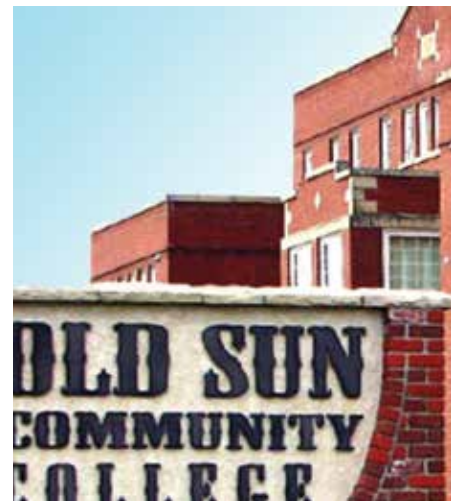
Labour shortages today and in the future in the trades make them a good option for any young person to explore. The Aboriginal Youth Initiative takes information about the trades into Aboriginal communities so youth have the knowledge they need when making career decisions.

Careers: The Next Generation, the Aboriginal Youth Initiative includes visiting schools and talking to youth and taking youth to colleges and career fairs. Companies looking for interns can also contact Careers: The Next Generation to be connected with Aboriginal students who might be right for them.

First Nations-Focused Post-Secondary Education

To help youth succeed, a number of post-secondary education institutions have been created to offer courses, programs, and services so First Nations students don't have to leave their communities.

Old Sun Community College is one example. There, the Aboriginal Practical Nurse diploma program gives students knowledge and skills for practical nursing, but Aboriginal culture, values, spirituality, and traditional healing methods are all part of the curriculum.



Chapter 15

The Road Ahead

The preceding passage means that decisions should be guided by consideration of the welfare and well-being of the seventh generation to come—140 years down the road. Albertans, whether Aboriginal or not, want their province to remain a good place for their children's children. When Aboriginal people march for clean water, for example, most of mainstream society realizes how important it is to protect this valuable resource, and want the same for generations to come. Aboriginal leaders say short-term economic gain that does not sustain our natural systems and the environment is folly, and game-changing partnerships with Aboriginal people in ventures like cleaner energy are the new reality.

It may well take a generation—20 years or more—to realize the full potential of Aboriginal/mainstream co-operation, but if this opportunity is meaningfully developed, it will ensure Aboriginal prosperity with a sustainable future for all.

Many Aboriginal leaders agree that First Nations have the right to self-determination and that self-governance is essential. They also agree that different peoples will need different models of self-governance. But there are varying ideas about how and when to pursue self-governance. Some First Nations have many resources and would like the *Indian Act* abolished.

"Live sustainably and work for the benefit of the seventh generation into the future ... even if it requires having skin as thick as the bark of a pine."

From the Great Binding Law of the Iroquois

Others with fewer resources would like to see the Act revised so they still have a continuing relationship with the federal government. Some groups want Canada's Aboriginal people recognized as one of Canada's founding nations. Urban Aboriginal people also have their own views and expectations.⁸⁵

On the road ahead, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples will be challenged as they work to agree on and achieve goals related to self-determination, creating self-sustaining communities and balancing mainstream and cultural values. What do Aboriginal peoples want the places they live in to look like in 50 years? How will

"My hope for (my son) is that he can live in a discrimination-free world where he is not judged by the colour of his skin, the length of his hair, and the colour of his eyes. That he will be judged by the contribution he makes to this world and to this community and to this city. For my First Nations community, I would like to have clean drinking water."

Shana Dion, Edmonton



Aaron Paquette

The writings and paintings of Aaron Paquette inspire a co-operative future between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal society. "Our work is to make this province, and this world, good for the seventh generation, to move from destruction to conservation. The future belongs to our young people, and they know it. With trust in the far-seeing, insightful teachings of our ancestors, coupled with laughter, education, and their desire to follow a cultural path, not only will the indigenous community be transformed but Alberta and Canada will be too. More and more people are waking up to this."

⁸⁵ Contemporary Issues, 104.

they manage the growing influences of globalization and mainstream culture? How can they prevent loss of identity and language? Getting large numbers of diverse individuals and groups to agree on these issues will not be easy.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit leadership will continue to focus on creating new economic opportunities for their people. Like much of rural Canada, many Aboriginal groups are also challenged by “brain drain”, a situation that occurs when young people move to larger urban centres for post-secondary education and choose not to bring their new skills and knowledge back to their homes. Consequently, leaders must also focus on finding ways to attract and retain qualified people, like doctors.

Cultural barriers and discrimination due to stereotypes continue to be issues for Aboriginal people. Better education for all is the answer. As other Albertans and Canadians learn what it is like to experience the world as an Aboriginal person and learn the facts as opposed to

the misconceptions, stereotypes will begin to break down.

The road ahead is one that all Albertans share. Through increased understanding of one another, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people will help to ensure that path leads us all to a successful future.

"My goals and modern-day aspirations as a Cree First Nations woman are to one day own my own home, and to be financially secure, with a good income and secure, stable employment that I enjoy, working with my own Aboriginal people, and assisting them to better their lives. I want to lead a healthy life, based on my own Cree culture, traditions, and spirituality and enjoy meaningful, healthy relationships with my family.

My goals for my nation are to be self-governing, with a strong traditional voice and to belong to a First Nation governance that also includes the women's voices and participation. I hope that my First Nation Cree people will be strong in the future and be healthy mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. I hope that in the future, my people will have healed from the negative effects of Canadian government's assimilation efforts and from the extremely harmful damaging effects of the residential schools.

I hope to see a seventh generation of First Nation youth that are strong leaders who know their language, culture, and traditions and use this knowledge gained from the elders to lead our people in a healthy way.

I hope to see our First Nation community self-sufficient and economically strong with good financial opportunities for our First Nation members. This would mean good jobs, good income, and opportunities for entrepreneurship or self-owned businesses by First Nations."

*Gail Gallagher, University of Alberta student
(MA student with major in native studies) Frog Lake First Nation*

Common Misconceptions about Aboriginal People

Myth: Aboriginal people don't pay taxes.

Because of the *Indian Act* and treaties, which only affect First Nations, First Nations people living and working on reserves don't have to pay personal or property tax. But Métis people and Inuit people pay taxes and First Nations people who live and work off the reserve are required to pay taxes in most circumstances. Canada Revenue Agency outlines the requirements at www.cra-arc.gc.ca.

Additionally, Aboriginal communities are typically small and don't have stores other than, perhaps, a gas station and convenience store or other small places like that. Community members travel to nearby towns and to larger urban centres to buy all the things they need. Tax must be paid on most of those purchases, even by First Nations members, and those purchases contribute to the local economies of those towns and cities.

Myth: Aboriginal people get free education and free health care.

Some do and some don't.

Aboriginal people are entitled to the same things everyone else is entitled to, including old-age pensions, employment insurance, the child tax benefit, health care, and K-12 education.

First Nations people also receive post-secondary education assistance and uninsured health-care benefits.

The federal government gives First Nations money for post-secondary education, within limits, and the nation decides who to fund and how much to provide to them. Certain criteria must be met when applying for this funding. However, there may be instances where there is more demand than funds, and communities have to limit applications.

The federal government also provides First Nations and Inuit people with a limited range of drugs, dental care, vision care, medical supplies and equipment, short-term crisis intervention, mental health counselling, and medical transportation.

"I aspire to not only keep traditional learning alive and lived, while learning and working in a modern-day environment. I see in other Inuit and Inuvait students and myself the importance of a university education to further not only our communities but our peoples as a whole."

Norma Dunning, Inuit post-secondary student

There are no similar programs available for Métis and Non-Status Indians.

Suggested Books

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Other

8TH FIRE: Aboriginal Peoples, Canada & The Way Forward, TV series, cbc.ca/doczone/8thfire//2011/11/tv-series-8th-fire.html

www.aboriginal.alberta.ca
Map of First Nations, and Métis Settlements with community locations, population, elected leaders, and language groups.

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To call toll-free from anywhere in Alberta,
dial 310-0000.

This publication is also available as a PDF
document at www.aboriginal.alberta.ca

November 2013

ISBN 978-1-4601-13073 PRINT

ISBN 978-1-4601-13080 WEB

For more information visit www.aboriginal.alberta.ca