

WALKING TOGETHER

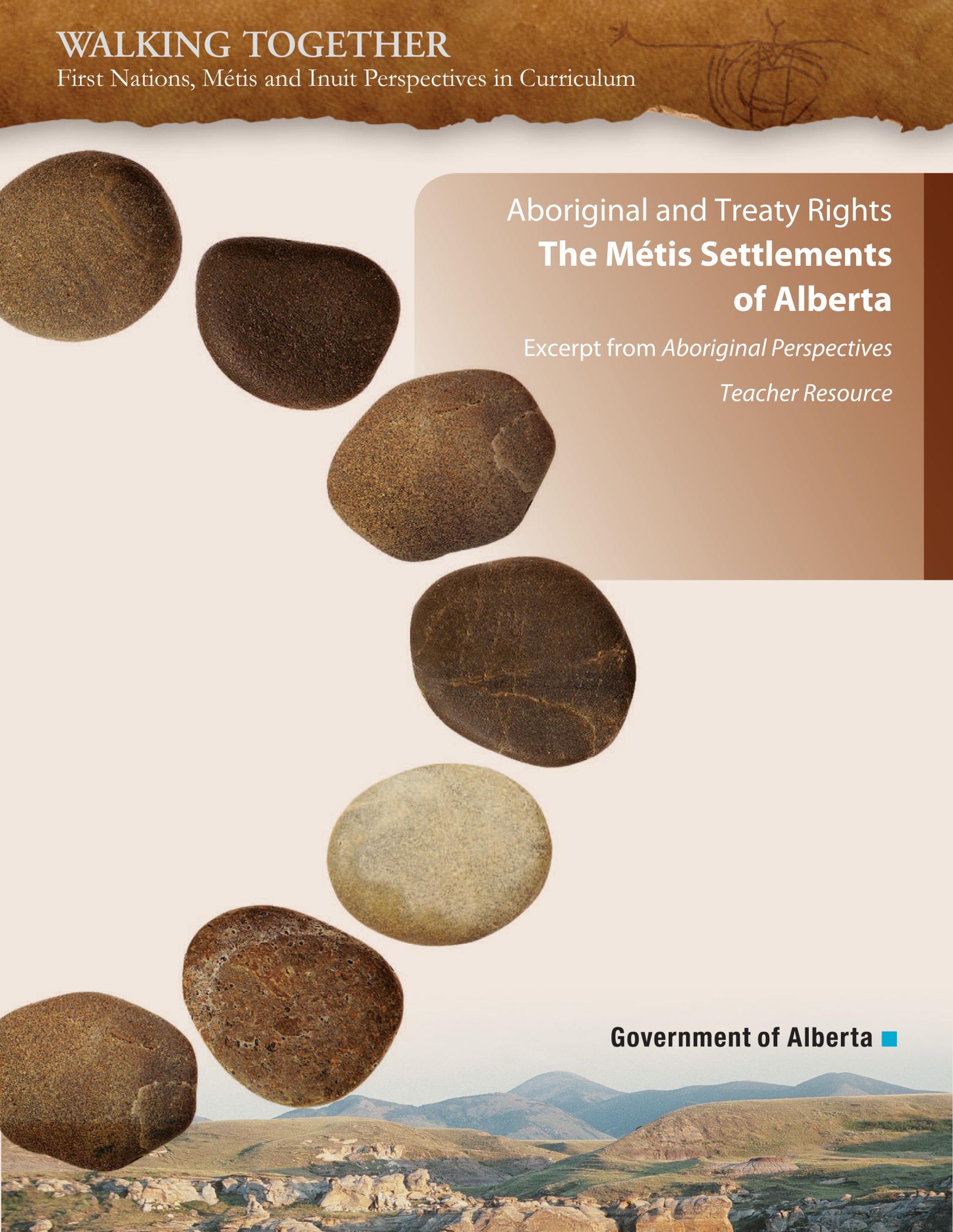
First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum

Aboriginal and Treaty Rights **The Métis Settlements of Alberta**

Excerpt from *Aboriginal Perspectives*

Teacher Resource

Government of Alberta ■





THE MÉTIS SETTLEMENTS OF ALBERTA

Excerpt from *Aboriginal Perspectives Teacher Resource*

THE MÉTIS SETTLEMENTS OF ALBERTA: TIMELINE, 1895–1990

- 1895 First Métis Settlement (St. Paul des Métis) established by federal government
- 1905 St. Paul des Métis terminated; land opened for public homesteading
- 1932 L'Association des Métis D'Alberta et des Territoires du Nord Ouest formed by Métis leaders to lobby the government on behalf of their people (name later changed to Métis Association of Alberta)
- 1935 Ewing Commission formed by the Alberta government to investigate conditions of Alberta Métis in response to requests by the Métis Association of Alberta for government intervention
- 1938 Métis Population Betterment Act passed by the Alberta Legislature, forming twelve Métis settlements
- 1960s Four Settlements are dissolved (Marlboro, Touchwood, Cold Lake, and Wolf Lake) and residents relocated; one used as a bomb-testing site
- 1975 Alberta Federation of Métis Settlement Associations formed to better lobby Alberta government
- 1982 MacEwan Committee formed to investigate situation of Métis Settlements; recommended that the Métis be given self-determination
- 1989 Métis Settlements Accord adopted; framework for land and self government. This included a package of legislation: the Constitution of Alberta Amendment Act, Métis Settlements Land Protection Act, Métis Settlements Act, and the Métis Settlement Accord Implementation Act
- 1990 Métis Settlements Legislation passed by the Alberta Legislature on November 1

Adapted from "Métis Settlements History," Métis Settlements General Council www.msg.ca/mhistory.htm (accessed December 2002)

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WHAT ARE THE MÉTIS SETTLEMENTS OF ALBERTA?

In 1938 the Alberta government set aside land for the Métis people, establishing eight Métis Settlements under the Métis Settlements Act. These eight geographic areas in Alberta have a land base of 1.25 million acres — the size of Prince Edward Island. This makes the Métis Settlements of Alberta distinct from other Métis organizations in Canada due to land-base. Each Settlement has its own diverse economy, but all eight are bound together by culture, history, and provincial legislation.

Each Settlement has a five-person council that is elected by the members of the Settlement. The council is headed by a chairperson that is selected by the other four council members. The Settlement Councils can make by-laws provided that they do not contravene any provincial law or general council policies. The bylaws must be approved by the Settlement members. The settlement council is also responsible for membership approval, land allocations within their Settlement.

Alberta is the only province that has passed legislation specifically for Métis people. On November 1, 1990 the Government of Alberta proclaimed legislation that provides for a unique form of government on the Métis Settlements. Developed cooperatively by the Province of Alberta and the Alberta Federation of Métis Settlements Association, this legislation establishes the only Métis land base and the only form of legislated Métis government in Canada. It was created in an effort to accommodate Métis aspirations of securing a land base, gaining local autonomy, and achieving self-sufficiency.

The Legislation

The legislation consists of:

- *Métis Settlements Act*
- *Métis Settlements Land Protection Act*
- *Constitution of Alberta Amendment Act, 1990*
- *Métis Settlements Accord Implementation Act.*

These acts establish the constitutional protection of 1.25 million acres of Settlement lands, the development of local governments structures and systems, and provincial financial commitments.

On March 26, 1998, the *Métis Settlements Statutes Amendment Act* was given royal assent. This act streamlined administrative processes, increased the effectiveness of government funding arrangements, and recognized the Settlements as local governments for the purpose of a number of provincial statutes.

As of 2002, the province was providing \$10 million per year in accordance with the Métis Settlements Accord Implementation Act. In addition, the government and the Métis Settlements General Council have entered into a funding agreement which will be reviewed annually. In 1998 \$12 million was provided to fund the General Council, individual Settlements, and the Métis Settlements Transition Commission.

In addition, co-management agreements provide opportunities for the Settlements to participate in the development of subsurface resources in their territories.

Métis Settlements

Eight Settlements are established by the *Métis Settlements Act*: Buffalo Lake, East Prairie, Elizabeth, Fishing Lake, Gift Lake, Kikino, Paddle Prairie, and Peavine. Each settlement is run by a five-person council that is elected by the membership and headed by a chairperson selected by the council members.

Settlement councils can make bylaws provided that they do not contravene any provincial law or general council policies. Bylaws must be approved by the members of the Settlement. Settlements councils are also responsible for determining the membership of, and land allocations within, their settlements.

Métis Settlements General Council

The general council is established by the *Métis Settlements Act*. It is comprised of the elected councillors of all the Métis Settlements and a four-person executive elected by the councillors.

The general council deals with matters that affect the collective interests of the eight Settlements. It makes policies that are binding on the general council and every Settlement. Policies are developed in consultation with the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Policies dealing with hunting, fishing, gathering and trapping must be approved by the lieutenant governor in council.

Métis Settlements Transition Commission

The Métis Settlements Transition Commission was established by the legislation, and is an independent corporation responsible for the successful implementation of the legislation. The commission assists the Settlements in developing and implementing fair and democratic local government and administrative processes. The commission helps provincial government departments in accommodating this unique form of local government, and assists the Settlements and general council in the development of policies, by-laws, and business plans.

The organization is headed by a commissioner who is jointly appointed by the general council and the government of Alberta.

Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal

The Métis Settlements Appeal Tribunal hears appeals between Settlement members and councils in the areas of land and membership. The tribunal may hear other matters provided that all parties agree to send them to it for a decision. The tribunal is also responsible for insuring mineral lease holders have access to their leased area and determining the compensation for any Settlement members and other parties affected by the lease or project.

The appeal tribunal is comprised of appointees from the Métis Settlements General Council and the government of Alberta. The chairman is appointed by the minister from a list submitted by the general council.