

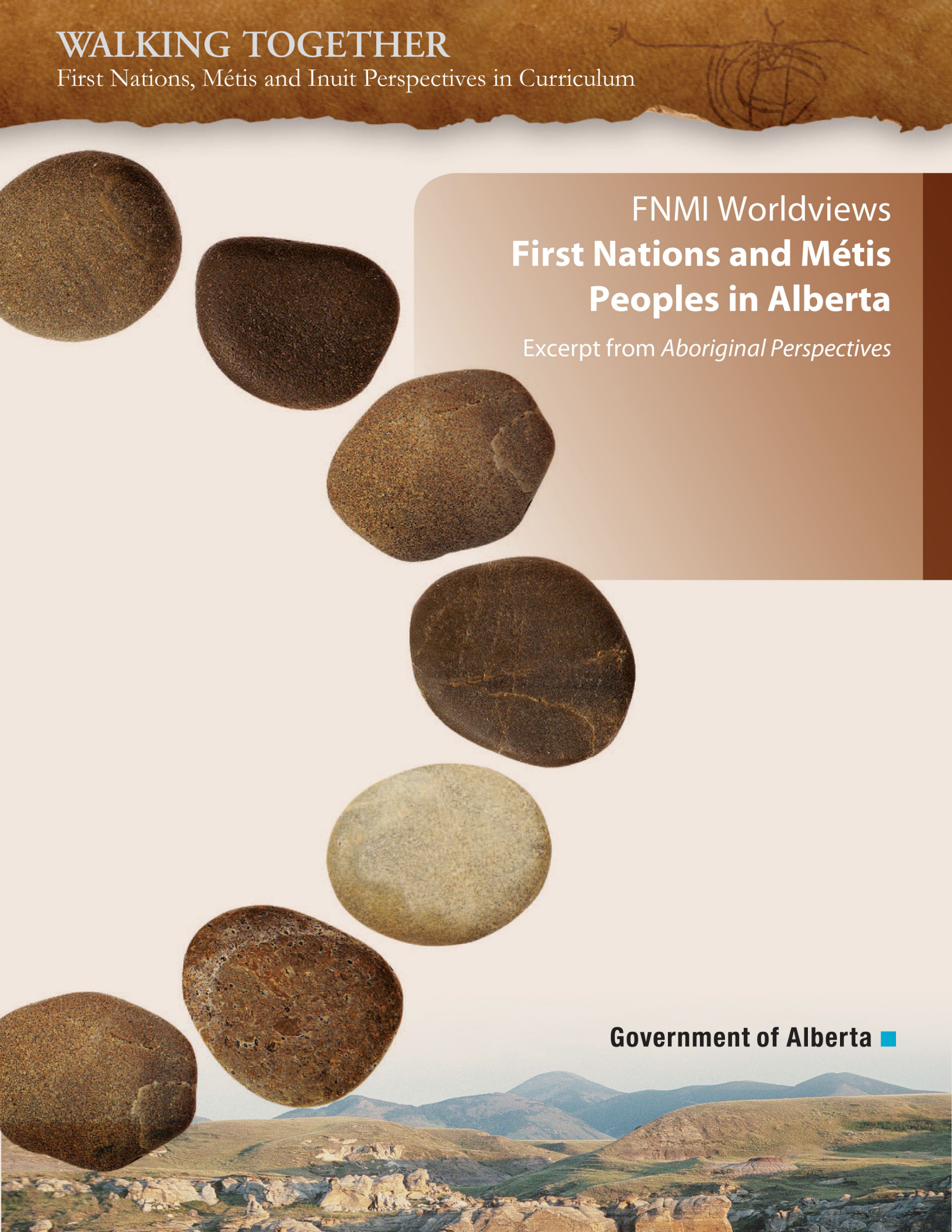
# WALKING TOGETHER

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Perspectives in Curriculum

## FNMI Worldviews First Nations and Métis Peoples in Alberta

Excerpt from *Aboriginal Perspectives*

Government of Alberta ■





## **FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS PEOPLES IN ALBERTA**

Excerpt from *Aboriginal Perspectives*

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### **FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS PEOPLES IN ALBERTA**

Alberta includes the northern tip of the Plains geographic region, with most of the province covered by Subarctic terrain. However, within these broad areas are ecological zones that include boreal forest, parkland, foothills, mountains, and grasslands. Each of these zones has different living conditions, with diverse animals, birds, fish, plants, water bodies, weather, and significant landforms.

First Nations communities made the best possible use of all resources in their environments. For example, Plains Cree people who lived in the parkland zone between the Plains grassland and Subarctic forest, hunted woodland animals such as moose, elk, and deer for part of the year and buffalo during the summer. Their diet, like that of all First Nations, also relied upon hundreds of edible plants that were available seasonally.

### **A Brief History of Major Aboriginal Cultural Groups in Alberta**

Understanding the diverse history of the groups and individuals that comprise Alberta's Aboriginal population can make understanding many current issues easier. The next few pages feature some of the history of the First Nations and Métis groups who live in Alberta.

Major migrations of First Nations coincided with the beginning of the fur trade on the Hudson Bay. Cree and Nakoda peoples moved farther and farther west in search of fresh trapping areas and western First Nations trading partners. This migration might have been like many others in history, sometimes advancing and sometimes retreating, but this time the Cree had guns from their European trading partners. Unarmed groups could do little to stop them. The Tsuu T'ina and the Blackfoot Confederacy were pushed south and the Dunne-za moved north. These movements in turn impacted the lives and territories of other groups in what is now Alberta.

Other groups, such as the A'aninin (Gros Ventre), the Shoshoni, and the Ktunaxa (Kutenai), once lived in this area, but they no longer have territory in this province. The A'aninin were once allies of the Blackfoot Confederacy but moved south to the United States in 1861. The Piikani of Alberta are sometimes considered the North Piikani, with the South Piikani from Montana as the fourth member of the Blackfoot Confederacy.

Another significant cultural group represented in Alberta's populations is the Haudenosaunee. During the fur trade era, many Haudenosaunee people came west to work in the trade. Many of their descendants still live in Alberta.



## **ANISHINABÉ**

The Anishinabé in Alberta are originally from the Eastern Woodlands near what is now Sault Ste Marie. They moved west in the late 1700s to work in the fur trade for the North West Company. The Anishinabé first settled in Manitoba, but then moved farther west and adopted a lifestyle of buffalo-hunting. They were close allies of the Plains Cree.

## **BLACKFOOT CONFEDERACY**

*Niitsitapi (Real People)*

The member nations of the Blackfoot Confederacy were once part of a single group. At some point, they split into three closely allied groups: the Kainai, the Piikani, and the Siksika. Historically, the Blackfoot Confederacy lived in large clan-based groups on the Plains and nearby foothills. According to oral history, they have always lived in this region and their culture was traditionally linked economically and spiritually with the buffalo.

## **CREE**

*Nehiyaw (Real People)*

Three distinct groups of Cree have a history in this province. The Plains Cree traditionally lived in the east central region of Alberta in the areas of the Battle and North Saskatchewan Rivers. In Cree, their name means “Downstream People,” referring to their location farther west from their original territory. They spent part of the year in the woodlands in extended family groups. In the summer, when the buffalo gathered in huge herds on the Plains, Plains Cree joined forces in large groups to hunt the animal.

The Woodland Cree were traditionally expert hunters and trappers. This group of Cree eventually became the backbone of the fur trade as suppliers and traders with other groups. Many Woodland Cree women married fur traders, so many Métis people share elements of the Woodland Cree cultural heritage. The Rocky Mountain Cree today live in the Grande Cache area. They once lived in more eastern regions of the country, but moved west during the fur trade. They eventually settled along the mountains and foothills.

## **DENE SULINÉ**

*(the term Dené means “person or people” in all Athapaskan languages)*

For centuries, the Dene Suliné people occupied the boreal forest and waters between Great Slave Lake and Hudson Bay. Their traditional territory encompassed a large triangular area in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, as well as much of northeastern Alberta, in the northwest to Great Slave Lake and northeast to Churchill. Although their territory reached as far as the Hudson Bay and the Arctic Ocean, they normally stayed inland, travelling the extensive water system of rivers, lakes, and muskeg.

Traditionally they lived and migrated in family groups, as catching fish and hunting caribou, wood buffalo, and birds. When the Hudson’s Bay Company opened in Fort Churchill, the Dena Suliné began a trading relationship with the Europeans and expanded their territory even further.

## **DENÉ THA'**

The Dené Tha' are the most northerly First Nation in the province. In their own language, Dené Tha' means "simple people." Dené Tha' traditional hunting grounds extend far into the Northwest Territories, but they consider Alberta's Caribou Mountains and Hay River regions part of their homeland. Traditionally they rarely left woodland areas, even if caribou were plentiful on the barren grounds to the north.

## **DUNNE-ZA**

The name Dunne-za means "pure people," but in common usage, the Dunne-za refer to themselves as Chatay, which means "beaver people." The Dunne-za traditionally lived in northern Alberta along the Peace River, which was often known by the Dene Suliné name Tsa Des (river of beavers). The Dunne-za lived in small family groups and were expert trappers and hunters in their heavily wooded environment.

## **MÉTIS PEOPLES**

Many Métis peoples in Alberta are the descendants of Métis families who moved west from the Red River settlement in Manitoba as it became increasingly settled and agricultural. They wanted to live a life based on the buffalo hunt. These Métis were sometimes called the Winter Rovers. Although today Métis people can be found in almost every town and city in Alberta, many live in the Métis Settlements that were founded in the 1930s to provide a land base for the Métis peoples in this province. They are the only Métis people in Canada to have a land base.

## **NAKODA**

The Nakoda people were once part of the Yanktonai Sioux, a cultural group of First Nations living between the Mississippi River and Lake Superior. In the early seventeenth century, the Nakoda were a distinct cultural group. They eventually became close Cree allies. Along with the Cree, they moved west along the North Saskatchewan River during the fur trade in pursuit of fresh trapping areas and new trading partners. In time, the Nakoda split into two branches. One continued the woodlands lifestyle that was their heritage. The people of the Paul and Alexis Bands (*lsgabi*) are descendants of these people. The second took up the Plains culture of the buffalo hunt. The people of the Morley Band (*lyethkabi*) are their descendants.

## **TSUU T'INA**

*Tsotli'na (Earth People)*

The Tsuu T'ina are related to northern Alberta's Dunne-za. They may have split into two groups around the time that the Cree and Nakoda moved west. They have lived apart for long enough that their languages are today quite different. Although they once lived mainly in the foothills, the Tsuu T'ina increasingly adapted the Plains life that revolved around the buffalo. They were close allies of the Blackfoot Confederacy and frequently intermarried with them.

## FIRST NATIONS AND MÉTIS LANGUAGES IN ALBERTA

This chart shows the major First Nations and Metis cultural groups considered indigenous to Alberta. Keep in mind, however, that Alberta is also home to many other Aboriginal peoples who have moved here from other regions. These people tend to live in urban centres in family groups.

### ALGONQUIAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

Blackfoot Confederacy  
 Kainai (*Blood*)  
 Piikani (*Peigan*)  
 Siksika (*Blackfoot*)

### ATHAPASKAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

Dene Suliné (*Chipewyan*)  
 Dené Tha' (*Slavey*)  
 Dunne-za (*Beaver*)  
 Tsuu T'ina (*Sarcee*)

### CREE

Plains Cree — or *Nehiyaw Paskwaweyiniwak*  
 Rocky Mountain Cree — or *Nehiyaw Asinywaciyiwiniwak*  
 Woodland Cree — or *Nehiyaw Sakawiyiniwak*

### Anishinabé

(*Saulteaux, Western Ojibway, Bungee*)

### SIOUAN LANGUAGE FAMILY

Nakoda (*Assiniboine/Stoney*)

### MÉTIS LANGUAGES

Métis-Cree

Michif

### WORDS FROM THE LAND

Language	buffalo	beaver	horse	canoe	dog team	dog sled
Blackfoot	iinii	ksisskstaki	ponokáómitaa	aahkiohsa'tsis	iimitaohkipistaa	toboggan*
Cree	Paskwâw mostos	amisk	mistatim	cîman	otâpahastimwewin	
Dene Suliné	ejere	tsá	tjçó	tsi		
Dene Tha	haikjcho	tsa	k'ijcho	e-lą	k'ljdedeya	klayzha
Dunne-za	kaymoe hukgree	cha	klaynchook	ala		woosloozhy
Michif	boefloo	kastor	zhwal	canoh		
Nakoda	tatanka**	coba	shortă	wa dah***		shŭga cusnahă
Tsuu T'ina	hani tii	mi cha di ko di	ist'í			

\* word borrowed from Abenaki language

\*\* male buffalo, refers to hump on back

\*\*\* log carved into boat

## MAP GUIDE TO FIRST NATIONS RESERVES AND MÉTIS SETTLEMENTS

The map on page 31 shows the location of the Métis Settlements as well as all First Nations reserves in Alberta. Each group is coded according to the main cultural group of the reserves population. The map guide on this page gives the names of each reserve or settlement and its corresponding number(s) on the map. Note that some reserves have more than one area of land.

Anishinabé/Cree  
 O'Chiese 203, 203 A

Blackfoot  
 Confederacy  
 Kainai 148, 148 A  
 Piikani 147, 147 B  
 Siksika 146

Cree  
 Alexander 134  
 Beaver Lake 131  
 Bigstone Cree 166, 166 A–D,  
 183  
 Driftpile 150  
 Duncan's 151 A, 151 K  
 Enoch 135  
 Ermineskin 138, 138A  
 Fort McKay 174, 174 A–B  
 Fort McMurray 175, 176,  
 176 A–B  
 Frog Lake 121, 122  
 Heart Lake 167\*  
 Horse Lake 152 B–C  
 Kapawe'no 229, 230, 231,  
 150 B–D

Cree (continued)  
 Kehewin 123  
 Little Red River 162, 215  
 Louis Bull 138B  
 Mikisew Cree 217–225  
 Montana 139  
 Saddle Lake 125, 128  
 Samson Cree 137 A  
 Sawridge 150 G–H  
 Sturgeon Lake 154, 154 A–B  
 Sucker Creek 150 A  
 Sunchild Cree 202  
 Swan River 150 E–F  
 Tallcree 163, 163 A–B, 173,  
 173 A–C  
 Whitefish Lake 155, 155A–B  
 Woodland Cree 226–228

Dene Sųtiné  
 Athabaskan Chipewyan 201,  
 201 A–G  
 Chipewyan Prairie 194,  
 194 A–B  
 Cold Lake 149, 149 A–B

Dené Tha'  
 207, 209–214

Dunne-za  
 164, 164 A

Nakoda  
 Alexis 133, 232–234  
 Paul 133 A–C  
 Nakoda 142, 142 B, 143, 144,  
 144 A, 216

Tsuu T'ina  
 145

Métis Settlements  
 Buffalo Lake 5  
 East Prairie 4  
 Elizabeth 7  
 Fishing Lake 8  
 Gift Lake 3  
 Kikino 6  
 Paddle Prairie 1  
 Peavine 2

- ⊗ \* While the Heart Lake First Nation is located in the Treaty Eight geographic area, it is considered part of Treaty Six.
- ⊗ <sup>1</sup> You will not find the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation, which is Cree for "Rocky Mountain People" on this map. This group lives near Grande Cache and includes an ancestral mix of Cree, Dunne-za, Sekani, Nakoda, Anishinabé, Haudenosaunee, and Métis people. The nation has six land cooperatives granted by the provincial government. These lands are not official reserves, because most members of the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation are **non-Status Indians**, which means they are not registered for benefits under the federal government's Indian Act.
- ⊗ <sup>2</sup> The Loon River Cree settled their land claim in 1995. Their reserve is near Red Eath Creek, north of High Prairie. Members of the Loon River First Nation were non-Status Indians until 1989-1990, when they applied for Status. Their reserve land does not appear on this map.
- ⊗ <sup>3</sup> One First Nation in Alberta does not have a reserve: the Lubicon Lake Cree. Their land claim is still outstanding.

