

The Métis First Nation in Sault Sainte Marie in the 1820's

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Today Sault Sainte Marie is a modern city in Ontario of 80,000 people. It is about 800 km by car from Ottawa. Sault Sainte Marie is a French name meaning Saint Mary's Falls.

In the 1820's, the Hudson's Bay Company owned a fur trading post in Sault Sainte Marie. The town was then a fur trading settlement with a Métis community of about 100 homes, mostly log cabins, built together and near the water. Many Métis owned farms near their homes.

For over 500 years, First Nations have lived in Sault Sainte Marie. About 400 years ago, French missionaries and fur traders started arriving there. Over time, as the French and First Nations people lived together and had families, they created a new First Nation called the Métis. The Métis have played an important role in the history of Canada.

Métis culture was a mixture of French and First Nations customs and traditions. The Métis developed a new language, called Michif, which was mostly a mixture of French and a First Nations language called Cree.



Sault Ste. Marie circa 1820

Métis Men

The Fur Trade was important in Sault Sainte Marie in the 1820's. Many Métis men worked for the Hudson's Bay Company. They might build canoes for it or sell goods, such as meat

and fish. Métis men were often paid, in return, with goods, such as flour, cloth or metal items like axes.

Often Métis men worked all summer away from home. They paddled large canoes great distances across what is now Canada. They carried supplies to other fur trading posts and returned with cargoes of furs. While home, during the winter, Métis men would hunt or trap animals.

Métis Women

Métis women worked hard to support their families. Like the Iroquois women, they cared for the children and the farm. They made clothing out of cloth and animal hides. Métis women wove colourful sashes. They also had an important role in the fur trade as they prepared and cleaned furs for trading.

Métis Children

Like other First Nations children, Métis children learned by watching their parents and elders. Girls worked with their mothers, and boys with their fathers. Métis children had many chores, such as cleaning furs. They also played games in their spare time like children anywhere. An interesting fact is that Metis children liked playing string games.

Questions: Pick the best answer.

1. From where did Métis culture come?
2. Métis language was mostly a mixture of
3. List three jobs that Métis men had.
4. True or False. Métis women would trap animals in the winter.
5. How did Métis children learn?
6. True or False. Métis men spent the summer working on the farm.
7. List two activities of Métis children according to the text.
8. About how many Métis homes were found in Sault Ste. Marie in the 1820's?
9. List three jobs that Métis women had.
10. True or false. Métis children liked playing string games and baseball.

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