Connecting ∞ to Heritage

A beginner's guide to
Métis genealogical research

MÉTIS NATION
BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Table of Contents

How to Use This Resource

This resource is divided into two main sections to guide and support your Métis genealogical research.

PART 1:
Research Handbook

The first section is your research handbook, which will walk you through the purpose, methods, and resources for effective family history research. Here, you'll find guidance on why research is valuable, how to approach it, and where to locate information relevant to your Métis family and ancestors. We recommend reading this section before you dive into your research.

PART 2:
Research Tools and Resources

The second section is a practical space to organize and record the information you discover. It includes a variety of customizable templates, blank indexes, and dedicated areas to store notes, documents, photographs, and other materials. You can use these tools to create an organized collection of your findings as you build your family history.

How to use a QR Code

A QR code is a square barcode that you can scan with your smartphone to quickly access websites. This resource uses QR codes throughout. Many links have a QR code directly to the right of them that leads to the same webpage.

Here's how to use them:

1. **Get a QR code scanner:** Most smartphones already have a camera that can scan QR codes automatically. If your camera doesn't automatically recognize them, you might also need to download a QR code scanner app.

2. **Open the camera app:** Point your smartphone's camera at the QR code. If you're using a QR code scanner app, open the app instead.

3. **Scan the code:** Hold your phone steady until the camera recognizes the QR code. You'll usually see a notification pop up on your screen.

4. **Follow the Link:** Tap the notification to open the website or content linked to the QR code.

5. **Enjoy the Content:** Once it opens, you can view the information, watch a video, or access whatever the QR code is linked to!

A group of unidentified Métis, Fort Dufferin, Manitoba. The formal survey of the border between Canada and the United States began in 1872. Fort Dufferin was constructed on the Red River that year and used as a base for the North American Boundary Commission until 1874. These two men might have been some of the Métis hired as scouts and guides by the Commission.

Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Geroge M. Dason fonds/e011156521

Introduction

WHAT IS GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH?

- It is the process of tracing and documenting your family's lineage, history, and relationships.

- For Métis families, it typically involves looking at historical documents, such as birth/ marriage/ death registrations, census and school records, or Métis scrip documents.

- After gathering information from these documents, it is often helpful to visualize it in a family tree or pedigree chart.

- The goal of genealogical and family research is to connect with your ancestors, learn about your family, and explore your cultural heritage.

WHY SHOULD YOU DO GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH?

- To strengthen your personal connection to your heritage.

- To get a glimpse into your ancestors' lives and discover how they lived.

- To learn more about Métis culture and strengthen your cultural identity.

- To better understand your place in the Métis community, who your people are, and where you come from.

- To gather family knowledge to pass down to future generations.

WHY IS GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH IMPORTANT FOR MÉTIS IN BC?

- It helps preserve Métis history.

- It helps connect Métis in BC to communities and families across the homeland.

- It helps to strengthen Métis nationhood.

- It helps connect Métis people with their ancestors.

Métis Heritage Highlight

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Who Are The Métis?

The Métis, along with First Nations and Inuit peoples, are one of Canada's three recognized Aboriginal Peoples under the Constitution Act of 1982.

Their beginnings can be traced back to the fur trade when marriages between European men and First Nations women resulted in families and communities of mixed ancestry. The children of these marriages grew up and often married other people of mixed heritage. Eventually, through a process called ethnogenesis, a unique Indigenous culture emerged.

The term Métis does not encompass all people with both Indigenous and European heritage. Instead, Métis refers to a Nation of people with their own culture, history, language, and kinship connections, distinct from both their First Nations and European ancestors. Métis people share and express a collective identity that continues to connect communities, families, and individuals.

Before You Begin

STAYING ORGANIZED:

Conducting genealogical research is a complex task, and it can involve keeping track of many different types of documents and sources. It is helpful to keep your research as organized as possible from the very beginning, and it is important to keep a detailed record of all your sources. You can experiment to find an organizational system that works for you!

SOME USEFUL ORGANIZATIONAL TIPS AND TRICKS:

• Make sure you record all your sources! Recording helps keep you organized and makes it easier for others to explore your research in the future. A good record of a source includes the type of record or material, the date it was created, the author, title and publisher, and the page number or web page.

• Keep all relevant documents together, and make sure they are clearly labelled. This could include census pages, birth certificates, and scrip records. It can be helpful to create an index of these documents that you can refer to throughout your research.

• Whenever possible, avoid using temporary or dynamic URLs of records or sources, as they can expire or change. Instead, try to locate a permalink, or permanent link, that will not change over time. You can find a permalink by:

◊ Checking for a "share" button on a web page. The provided link is often a permalink.

◊ Looking at the address bar. Many web pages' URLs serve as their permalinks. Open a web page in your browser and look at the entire URL in the address bar. Temporary or dynamic URLs typically have a lot of random characters. Shorter URLs tend to be more stable.

◊ Looking for a permalink section. Archives frequently have permalinks connected to their digital records. Blogs and articles often provide a permalink right below the title, near the author's name and publication date.

◊ Asking for help from the website. If you are unsure about a link or can't find a stable one, you can always look for a "contact" page or help section on the website and ask for guidance.

Key term: Source

A <u>source</u> is any sort of material that provides information, evidence, or data related to your research. Sources help support, validate, or expand your understanding of a chosen topic. There are two main types of sources:

- *__PRIMARY SOURCES:__ Are original, firsthand documents or data directly related to your family and ancestors. Primary sources are materials that were created at the time the event happened. These include birth/ death/marriage records, scrip certificates, census documents, interviews, cultural objects, or photographs.*

- *__SECONDARY SOURCES:__ Are interpretations of primary sources, including textbooks, review articles, and biographies. They summarize or critique information from primary sources and are typically created after the time period of the primary source.*

The line between primary and secondary sources is not always clear. A single document can serve as both a primary and a secondary source, depending on its use. Take, for example, a death registration document. This record is created at the time of a person's death, making it a primary source when referencing details like the date or time of death. However, if the document is used to gather information about the person's birth or their parents, it becomes a secondary source because the person who filled it out may not have had firsthand knowledge of those events.

A death registration might be completed by a parent or spouse, which increases the likelihood that the birth and parental information is accurate. On the other hand, it could also be filled out by someone with limited knowledge of the deceased, like a neighbor. In some cases, especially when someone passed away while traveling, the details might come from people who barely knew them or relied on secondhand information.

This example highlights how the creation of these documents can affect their accuracy, particularly for details like names, dates, or locations. Recognizing these complexities is critical to understanding why inconsistencies may appear in historical records, and it underscores why it is important to think about all documents critically.

Getting Started

Métis Heritage Highlight

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The Métis Family

The family has always played an important role in the lives of Métis people. This includes the immediate family and the extended multigenerational family structure known as kinship networks. Throughout the history of the Métis, the family has helped to strengthen social and political relationships. During the days of the fur trade, economic partnerships were formed based on family and kinship ties. The family unit was also the foundation of buffalo camps, where every member of the family had an important role.

The family continues to connect Métis people to their community and their history. Many aspects of Métis culture, like jigging, needlework, cooking, and the Michif languages, are rooted in family, practiced in community, and based on traditions and knowledge passed down through generations.

Start with yourself and work backward as you begin researching your family tree. Gather family information you may already have or know, including:

◊ Names of relatives (parents, grandparents, great-grandparents)

◊ Years of births and deaths

◊ Where they live

◊ Where they were born

• Connect with family members to see what information they have. Relatives hold knowledge of family stories and information on family members who came before them, and they are an invaluable source of information. The immediate and extended family is the heart of Métis history, life, and culture, and this research should be done with their guidance whenever possible.

• Consider connecting with other community members about genealogical research. Different people and families may have different memories or understandings of certain events. Gathering stories from many different perspectives and looking at them as a whole can create a more well-rounded family history. Métis life is deeply rooted in community, and this research can be a meaningful way to contribute to and strengthen those connections.

A Métis family portrait. The shawls worn by the woman and the girls in the photograph were popular among the Métis. Probably taken at Osnaburgh House, Ontario sometime around 1886.

Courtesy of Robert Bell. Library and Archives Canada/ e011156727_s1.

Digging Deeper

Now that you've gathered all the family information you already know or have easy access to, it's time to explore the lesser-known branches of your family tree! This section provides an overview of some sources that can help you uncover more detailed information about your ancestors and family, including:

◊   Métis scrip records

◊   Census records

◊   Birth, marriage, and death records

◊   Military records

◊   Fur trade records

MÉTIS SCRIP RECORDS

Métis scrip documents are an invaluable source of genealogical information, as they often have birth dates and names that may not be available in church records.

You can search the **Library and Archives Canada** main collection for Métis scrip documents.

To more effectively search for a specific scrip certificate, use the following steps:

- Select **Advanced search** on the main Collections search page

- In the **All these words** search field enter "RG15, scrip, [the name of your ancestor]."

  ◊   It is essential to include commas when using this field.

  ◊   RG15 is one of the archival reference numbers for materials relating to the Department of the Interior, which was the branch of government responsible for issuing scrip.

- Under **Database**, select **Collections and fonds**

- Under **Hierarchical** level select **File**

- Leave the other selections blank and click **Search**

Helpful hints for searching scrip records:

- Scrip certificates, also called warrants, can sometimes resemble government bonds or bank notes. Other scrip certificates look plainer.

- Scrip applications may also be useful sources of genealogical information, as they contain names of parents, places of birth, and details about siblings and children. If you want to search for scrip applications and other related documents, use the search process above without the word "scrip" in the "All these words" search field.

- Métis scrip was often issued to heads of families. Scrip issued to women can be harder to find, as it can be listed under a woman's married or maiden name. Sometimes, a woman's scrip documents are listed under the name of her father or brother. You may have to try searching a combination of names of people in a woman's immediate family.

Check out Library and Archives Canada's complete guide to researching scrip here:
Finding Métis Scrip
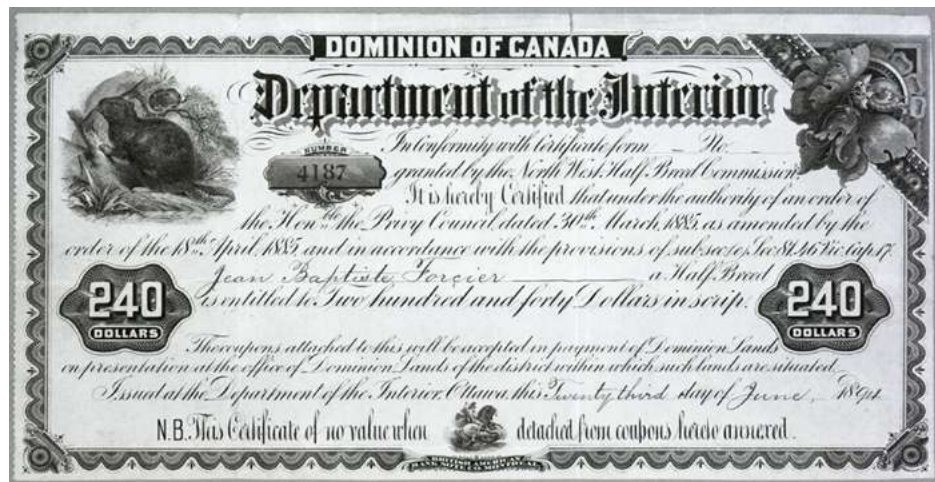
This scrip certificate, issued to Baptiste Forcier in 1894 and valued at $240, resembles a banknote. This is similar to many other scrip certificates that were issued around this time.

Courtesy of Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary. 1894-06-23, (CU1110299) by Unknown.

While some scrip certificates resemble bank notes, others have a simpler look. This scrip certificate for 240 acres was issued in 1887.

Courtesy Library and Archives Canada.

A scrip affidavit, like this one signed by Francis Riel, is another document that you may come across in your research. Scrip affidavits were how Métis people applied to receive scrip certificates. As you can see from this example, scrip affidavits contain lots of information that is useful for genealogical research.

Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Department of the Interior fonds/ 1503592.

CENSUS RECORDS

Censuses contain valuable information for researchers about individuals and their families, including, age, birthplace, gender, occupation, and marital status. These records are particularly useful for Métis genealogical research because they frequently contain information about ethnic heritage, and censuses throughout Canadian history have often identified Métis people.

You can search all Canadian census records through the Library and Archives Canada Census Returns Database: **Census search**

Helpful hints for searching census records:

- It is important to note that the way Métis people have been recorded in censuses is complex and was often influenced by colonial or racist worldviews of census takers. Your ancestors may have been identified as Métis, "half-breed," "French breed," "Scotch Breed," "Bungee," or other terms in Canadian censuses. The 1901 census identified people by colour, and Métis families were often indicated with an "R" for red, compared to a "W" or "B" for white(or blanc) for a French-Canadian family with the same last name.

- Censuses are not always 100% accurate. They can be a good guide, but there can also be spelling mistakes or variances in spelling from one census to the next.

- Library and Archives Canada also has a census search guide that provides valuable tips for searching the database, including different abbreviations used to identify Métis people. Check out the guide here: **General census guide**

This page of the 1901 census was taken in Sandy Lake, Saskatchewan. While it is a slightly different format from the census taken in Victoria, BC, it also includes "Colour" and "Racial and Tribal Origins" sections. Everyone on this page is identified as "R" for "red", and a few people are marked as "Cree f.b." for "Cree French breed".

Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Census of Canada 1901, Ottawa.

Page from the 1901 Census of Canada, documenting residents of Victoria, British Columbia. It captures information like ages, occupations, and religion. As you can see, this census also included a "Colour" column, with Métis people often identified with an "R" for "red". In the Racial or Tribal Origin" column, Métis people were frequently categorized based on their mixed Indigenous and European heritage. Specific abbreviations used in this column to identify Métis people included "f.b." for "French breed", "h.b" for "halfbreed", "s.b" for "Scottish breed", or "e.b" for "English breed". You can see that several individuals are identified as "English Breed" and "Scottish Breed" on this page of the census.

Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Census of Canada 1901, Ottawa.

This is a page taken from the 1870 Manitoba census. As you can see, there is a column to mark individuals as "Half-breed".

Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.

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BIRTH, MARRIAGE, AND DEATH RECORDS

Provincial and territorial governments typically keep records of births, marriages, and deaths, and records of these events are sometimes transferred to provincial and territorial archives. You can search for records of births, marriages, and deaths by province at:

- Alberta: https://provincialarchives.alberta.ca/how-to/find-birth-marriage-and-death-records

- Manitoba: https://vitalstats.gov.mb.ca/Query.php

- BC: https://search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy

- Saskatchewan: http://genealogy.ehealthsask.ca/vsgs_srch.aspx

- Ontario: https://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/tracing/vsmain.aspx

Helpful hints for searching Birth, Death and Marriage Records

- Some of these records have been transferred to Library and Archives Canada. The **Birth, Marriages and Deaths Recorded** in Canada database contains 36,000 records of family events. It may be helpful to check this database as well.

- Many baptism, death, and marriage records are also still held by the church. Often, these records are recorded twice, once by the province and the other by the church. Researchers should consult church records in their ancestors' parishes whenever possible. Keep in mind that there may be some spelling and/or name variance here as well.

- Some birth certificates do not include a place of birth, only geographical coordinates.

77-09-001266 266 26

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS, AND MARRIAGES ACT, 1872.

SCHEDULE B.—Marriages.

Registration District No. *1.*

16mc

No.	*29* *355*	
His name.	*George Archibald McTavish*	
Age.	*20*	
Residence when married	*Victoria*	
Place of birth.	*United States*	
Condition.	*Bachelor*	
Rank or Profession.	*Gentleman*	
Name of parents.	*Duncan Archibald & Margaret Eliza*	*McTavish*
Her name.	*Catherine Amelia Helmcken*	
Age.	*22*	
Residence when married	*Victoria V.I.*	
Place of birth.	*Victoria V.I.*	
Spinster or widow.	*Spinster*	
Name of parents.	*John Sebastian & Cecilia*	*Helmcken*
Name of witnesses.	*J. S. Helmcken*	*M J McTavish*
Residence of witnesses.	*Victoria*	*Victoria*
Date of marriage.	*4 Decr 1877 at 9 o'clock A.M.*	
Religious denomination of bridegroom.	*R. Episcopal*	
Religious denomination of bride.	*R. Episcopal*	
By whom married.	*Bishop Cridge*	
By license.	*Yes*	
By banns.		
Remarks.		

BRIDEGROOM. / BRIDE.

I hereby certify the particulars given in the above Report to be correct to the best of my knowledge and information.

Dated the *eighth* day of *January* , A. D. 187*8*.

Signature of Officiating Clergyman, &c. } *E. Cridge*

28/2/78

Marriage registrations can look very different depending on the time and place they were created. This registration document was created for the marriage of George Archibald McTavish and Catherine Amelia Helmcken, which took place in 1877 in Victoria, British Columbia. If your relatives were married in BC around the same time, their marriage registration documents could look similar.

Courtesy of British Columbia, Division of Vital Statistics, Marriage registrations 000001-0000415, 1872 -1878.

Métis Heritage Highlight
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Métis in Canada's Military During the 20th Century

Although we know that many Métis soldiers served in Canada's military during the 20th century, we don't have exact numbers. Soldiers were not required to declare their ethnic history or origins, so Métis identity is not often noted in service records. Many soldiers may have chosen not to disclose the fact they were Métis due to fears of racism. Others may not have even known they were Métis.

Veterans Affairs Canada acknowledges that they do not have accurate numbers of Indigenous people who served in armed conflicts of the 20th century, including records of Métis soldiers. Their best estimates are that approximately 12000 Indigenous people served during this time and that 500 sadly lost their lives.

The National Métis Veterans' Memorial Monument in Batoche honors 5000 Métis veterans, and the Métis Crossing Veterans' Monument commemorates 2300 Métis veterans from Alberta.

MILITARY RECORDS

Métis soldiers have served important roles in many of Canada's armed conflicts, including the First and Second World Wars. It may be helpful to search your ancestors in the following databases:

Second World War Service Files – War Dead, 1939 to 1947

Personnel Records of the First World War

Helpful hints for searching military records:

- Some military records only have an initial instead of a full first name. If your search is unsuccessful, try searching by last name.

- Officers did not have service numbers, and they should be searched by rank.

- Only records of individuals who died in the Second World War are publicly available. If your ancestor survived the Second World War, you would have to submit a request for their service records.

FUR TRADE RECORDS

Many Métis were employed at the North West and Hudson's Bay Company fur trading posts, and records relating to their work can help uncover more information about their lives. The Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) is administered by the Archives of Manitoba. These records contain many valuable documents, including Servant's Contracts for the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. Servant's Contracts list names, posts, ages, contract lengths, and wages.

You can search the HBCA through the Archives of Manitoba website. Find links to databases and information about searching the archives here:

Hudson's Bay Company Archives

Searching fur trade records helpful hints:

- The records held by the HBCA include biographical sheets, fur trade post maps, ships' histories, and name indexes.

- Some contracts, particularly those created before 1778, did not survive. Just because you cannot find a contract for your ancestor does not mean a fur trade company did not employ them.

- Sometimes, formal contracts were not created in the case of seasonal work.

- While your ancestor may have lived near a fur trading post, it is possible a

company did not actually employ them. If this is the case, their information may not have been recorded.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Other documents, materials, and resources related to the history of Métis people are housed at various sites across the homeland and beyond. Some other places to explore include:

- **The Glenbow Library and Archives:** These records, now held at the University of Calgary Glenbow Western Research Centre, contain many materials and documents related to Métis history and genealogy. Some specific collections to explore include:

  ◊ Charles Denny Fonds and Metis genealogy files

  ◊ Metis Association of Alberta Fonds

  ◊ Warren Sinclair's Metis Genealogy collection

  ◊ George Burtonshaw's Metis Genealogy Research Collection

- **The Société Historique de Saint-Boniface:** This historical society maintains an extensive archival collection relating to the history of Métis people living in Western Canada, particularly Manitoba. They also have several other helpful resources, including research guides and genealogy services.

- Genealogical societies: These societies share information and resources related to genealogical research. There are larger societies in every province, but there are also many smaller local and regional ones.

  ◊ Alberta Genealogical Society https://www.abgenealogy.ca/

  ◊ British Columbia Genealogical Society https://www.bcgs.ca/

  ◊ Manitoba Genealogical Society https://mbgenealogy.com/

  ◊ Saskatchewan Genealogical Society https://saskgenealogy.com/

  ◊ Ontario Ancestors: The Ontario Genealogical Society https://ogs.on.ca/

- Archives and museums in or near Métis communities.

- Your local libraries! Many books, articles, and other materials about the history of Métis communities and individuals can borrow from libraries. These resources often have useful genealogical information. Try searching at your local public library or post-secondary libraries in your community.

USEFUL RESEARCH TOOLS

- Ancestry.ca
    - ◊ A widely used genealogy website with many resources available.
    - ◊ Allows you to search and access many Canadian records in a convenient and central location.
    - ◊ While there is a cost associated with this service, they sometimes offer free weekends close to Family Day weekends, and they have a free trial available.
    - ◊ Ancestry.ca is a great resource for preliminary research. However, information found on Ancestry.ca should not necessarily be taken as a primary source. Much of the content on Ancestry.ca is user-generated and not fact-checked.
- Findagrave.com
    - ◊ Search for any grave worldwide.
    - ◊ This information is also user-generated.
- Familysearch.org
    - ◊ A free genealogical website similar to Ancestry.ca
    - ◊ You can get better access to features if you create a free account.
    - ◊ Similar to Ancestry.ca, it is important to remember that some of the information on Familysearch.org is user-generated and not always fact-checked. It is best to confirm findings with another source whenever possible.

This image of a camp scene on the Prairies, taken between 1872-1873, shows a group of Métis people with Red River carts.

Courtesy Library and Archives Canada// C-081787.

CANADIANS AND BOIS BRULES.

This artwork, which was originally published in a magazine in 1859, shows a group of Métis dancing in camp near Pembina area, Manitoba.

Courtesy of Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary, 1859, (CU181325) by Unknown.

Research Guidelines and Tips

It is important to remember that any genealogical research project takes time and patience. Finding research strategies and methods that work best for you is also important. As you discover those processes, here are some helpful research tips and tricks to consider:

- Think about critical events and locations connected to the Métis Nation. This can help you piece together where your ancestors may have been and when they might have been there. Métis families moved around a lot, and knowing the historical context can help you understand why.

- Keep in mind that people could have been married more than once. This means that women can have multiple married names.

- Be aware that spelling, particularly of names, was not standardized until relatively recently. The same names might be written in many ways, especially if they are written in English and/or French. Try searching for multiple spelling variations or for names that are not exact but sound similar (for example, Mary/Marie, John/Jean).

- Pay close attention to ages; they tell an important part of the story. If someone seems too old or young to get married or have children, you might not be looking at the right person. At the same time, it's important to remember that the typical age for marriage or starting a family in the past was different from today. Many people married and had children at an age that might be considered relatively young by modern standards.

- Make sure you have the right person! Namesakes, or naming a child after a relative, was, and is, a popular Métis custom. While this is a lovely family tradition, it can mean that there is often more than one person in a family line with the same name. Verify you have the correct ancestor by cross-referencing things like birthdates and places of birth.

- Be aware that photographs can be misidentified. While it can be exciting to find photos of your ancestors, it is important to remember that archives have many misidentified or half-identified photos. Pay close attention to where you find photographs, and ensure it is a reputable source. It is always a good idea to confirm what your ancestors looked like through multiple pictures from multiple sources whenever possible.

- Evaluate the source you are using, not just the information presented. It is always helpful to ask questions like:

    ◊ Who wrote this document?

    ◊ When was it written?

    ◊ Why did they write it?

    ◊ What might their biases be?

- Be conscious of the fact that people may have adopted or raised children for other community members. This was especially true around and during wartime.

- Keep in mind that some death records may not be accurate. Sometimes, these records were not created at the actual time of an event and may have been produced later.

- Consult maps whenever possible. Place names frequently change. Places can also move over time when boundaries shift due to treaties or wars.

- Be aware that names can change over time. Try looking for maiden names or adopted names. It is also a good idea to be aware of any dit names your ancestors may have had.

- Try to learn any nicknames or alternative first names that your ancestors or relatives may have had. Using nicknames and alternative first names was and is a common Métis practice, and keeping track of more than one name can be complicated.

- Keep in mind that ages and birth dates may be incorrect. Sometimes, it was not possible to create an official record of births at the time they happened. Métis often lived in places long before any missionaries or priests arrived, and these were the people in charge of making official documents like birth, baptism, and death records. The official record of an event may have been created later.

- Take note of any contradictory evidence. It is very possible that you may come upon two sources with different details or versions of events. Make a note of any discrepancies that you may need to investigate further.

- Reach out to others undertaking Métis genealogical research. Many online communities and groups can provide lots of helpful information and contacts. Métis genealogy groups on Facebook are a great place to start – try looking for one based in your ancestors' communities.

Key term: Dit Names

Métis <u>dit names</u> are a naming tradition often found among Métis families, influenced by a blend of Indigenous and French-Canadian cultures. Essentially, a dit name is an alternate surname added to or used interchangeably with a family's primary surname. These names were especially common in French-Canadian and Métis communities and served several practical and social purposes. They could be nicknames or descriptors that helped distinguish one family line from another, particularly in communities with many families with the same last name. Dit names could also indicate a person's occupation or place of residence. For example, a Métis family with the surname "Beaulieu" might adopt a dit name like "dit LaMontagne" if they were known for living near or working in the mountains.

Dit names are known for their flexibility. They often changed across generations or were only adopted by certain family members. Some Métis families may retain both surnames (e.g., "Beaulieu dit LaMontagne"), while others might drop the original or dit name over time. This variability can sometimes make them a challenging aspect of Métis genealogical research.

MISTAKES TO AVOID

- Skipping over generations. This leaves too much room for error. If you have trouble finding information about an ancestor, try looking at another source or searching for them under a different name.

- Trying to link to a specific person. You always want to start with yourself and work backward through the generations. If you can't naturally link one person to another, don't force it.

- Not thinking critically about sources. Make sure you keep in mind why a source was created and by whom. For example, obituaries can be helpful for finding family members, but they were typically written for a very specific purpose and may leave out key details. It is also important to carefully consider the accuracy of other people's genealogical research, especially unpublished information you find online. Consider who has written the source and if other researchers have confirmed it.

- Using indexes and databases as primary sources. While these tools are helpful in finding documents related to your ancestors, it is essential that you read the original documents related to your family history. Mistakes and misunderstandings can sometimes lead to errors in indexes and databases.

- Letting frustration stop you. Genealogy research can sometimes be challenging or disheartening, especially if you can't find the information you are looking for. If you find yourself stuck on a particular ancestor, take a moment to reassess your research approach. You can always try going back a generation and widening the search to look at siblings in the same generation. This may give you more information about the family and help you make a connection. Sometimes, you might only be able to find very little information about a certain ancestor, like a birth and death date. Try not to be discouraged. Remember that this work is all about the process and that you should enjoy the journey!

Key term: Indexes and databases

Indexes and databases are sometimes referred to as tertiary sources. They provide general overviews or summaries that compile primary and secondary sources, almost like an encyclopedia. They are used to help researchers locate key information across many works. Databases and indexes are meant to be a helpful starting point for research, not a final source of information. Some examples of popular indexes that you might come across in your research include:

- *__The Métis National Council Historical Database:__ contains a detailed index of Métis individuals based on historical records, such as census data, parish records, and scrip records.*

- *__Indexes for Red River Settlement Records:__ includes information taken from registers of baptisms, marriages, and burials created by Anglican ministers who were appointed by HBC to serve as chaplains in the Red River Settlement and surrounding areas, including Norway House, York Factory, Churchill Factory, Brandon House and Pembina.*

- *__Indexes for Hudson's Bay Company Records:__ includes information taken from contracts and related records of Hudson's Bay Company employees, including employee names, parish/post names, ages, contract lengths, terms of service, positions held, and wages.*
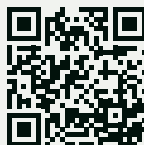
This photograph from 1895 shows two Métis people being pulled by horse and sled. The description indicates that they are going to Lac La Biche for New Year's celebrations.

Courtesy of Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary,1895, (CU176568) by Unknown.

Beyond Research:
Making Real-Life Connections
with Your Ancestors

Genealogical research is a great way to learn more about your ancestors, where you come from, and who you are. Knowing and sharing your family names is an important way of connecting to the Métis community. But research is only one piece of the puzzle. Being Métis is about more than just knowing your heritage; it's about actively experiencing and engaging with Métis culture.

We encourage you to connect with your ancestors by living your Métis heritage and identity in your everyday life. This could mean:

- Cooking a traditional Métis recipe

- Learning about and speaking the traditional language of the Métis, which is known as Michif

- Attending local Métis cultural programs or events (potlucks, workshops)

- Getting involved with your local Métis Chartered Community

- Practicing and learning Métis heritage art forms like beading, embroidery, quilling, leatherwork, or tufting.

However you choose to live and embrace your Métis heritage and culture, it is important that you share the experience with your community whenever you can. Being in community can help deepen your connection to your heritage, to your culture, and even to your ancestors!

Métis Heritage Highlight
∞

The Flower Beadwork People

Métis needlework, including beadwork is a powerful and vibrant expression of Métis culture. Often referred to as the Flower Beadwork People, the Metis are known for their distinctive floral designs, which they use to decorate clothing, moccasins, and accessories. This tobacco bag from 1880-1900 (pictured left) beautifully showcases the intricate and colourful floral beadwork that exemplifies Métis artistry.

Courtesy of Unknown, tobacco bag, 1880-1900, from the collection of the Amelia Douglas Institute

Métis Heritage Highlight ∞

Métis Cultural Practices

Métis people have a rich history of cultural traditions that continue to be practiced by many skilled artists, makers, and community members today. These cultural practices are a unique blend of First Nations and European traditions. While they draw inspiration from these cultures, Métis expressions of culture are distinct from both. Whether it is fiddling, floral beadwork, hunting, or harvesting traditional medicines, cultural activities are all part of a unique cultural tapestry that makes up the Métis identity.

Métis cultural traditions are ones that have been practiced by Métis people throughout history. These practices have connections to historical Métis communities and individuals and have been well documented as being common aspects of Métis cultural expression.

Some Métis expressions of culture include:

- *Floral beadwork and silk embroidery*

- *Hunting, trapping, and fishing*

- *Quillwork and moose hair tufting*

- *Woodworking, including boat building, furniture making, and red river cart making*

- *Sewing and leatherwork*

- *Food traditions*

- *Jigging and fiddling*

- *Storytelling and oral history*

- *Traditional medicine and healing practices*

- *Weaving*

- *The Michif languages*

AMELIA DOUGLAS INSTITUTE

Discover more about Métis culture at the Amelia Douglas Institute, British Columbia's centre for Métis arts, culture, and language.

AMELIA DOUGLAS INSTITUTE
For Métis Culture and Language

Published Genealogy and Historical Resources

An important part of genealogical research is exploring and analyzing what is already known about your family, ancestors, and Métis communities. By examining existing secondary sources like books and articles, you can uncover connections, stories, and details that will help you more fully understand the context of your family history.

Books about Métis individuals and communities often contain useful genealogical information. Several published works focus specifically on Métis genealogy, offering insights into family histories, lineages, and cultural ties. These resources may have valuable information about your family's past. Searching for books and articles about specific communities where your ancestors lived might be useful.

Here are a few foundational works to help you get started:

- *Women of the Metis Nation* edited by Lawrence J. Barkwell. Published by the Louis Riel Institute, 2010.

- *Veterans and Families of the 1885 Northwest Resistance* by Lawrence J. Barkwell. Published by the Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2011.

- *The Female Metis Genealogy* by Lorna Carter, Rev. ed. The Author, 1999.

- *Métis Families* by Gail Morin

- *Métis Communities Series.* DVD. Produced by Gabriel Dumont Institute,

- *Rooster Town: The History of an Urban Métis Community, 1901 -1961* by Evelyn Peters, Matthew Stock, and Adrian Werner, University of Winnipeg Press, 2018.

- *French Canadians of the West: A Biographical Dictionary of French Canadians and French Métis of the Western United States and Canada* by Peter J. Gagné, Quintin Publications, 2000.

- *Memories of a Metis settlement: Eighty years of East Prairie Metis settlement with firsthand memories : 1939 to today* by C. Brissenden East Prairie Metis Settlement, publisher, Theytus Books, publisher, East Prairie Metis Settlement, Theytus Books, 2018.

- *The North-West Is Our Mother: The Story of Louis Riel's People, the Métis Nation* by Jean Teilliet, Harper-Collins Publishers, 2021.

- *Métis Outpost: Memoirs of the First Schoolmaster at the Metis Settlement of Kelly Lake, B.C. 1923-1925* by Gerry Andrews, 1985.

- *Stories of Métis Women: Tales My Kookum Told Me* by Bailey Oster and Marilyn Lizee, UpRoute Books and Media, 2021.

- *The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation* complied by the D.N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, Pemmican Publications, 1983.

- *The History of the Métis of Willow Bunch* by Ron Rivard and Catherine Littlejohn, Published by the Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2003.

The books and resources listed here reflect research and perspectives available at the time of publication. However, definitions and understandings of Métis and Métis identity have evolved and changed over time, and some works may include inaccuracies or contested interpretations. Readers are encouraged to critically engage with these materials, recognizing that even credible sources may contain outdated or debated information.

This illustration depicts a Métis New Year's Day celebration at Lac La Biche, Alberta, in 1895. You can see a dog team in the foreground and a horse and sleigh in the background. It appears that many of the people in the work are wearing wool trade blankets — the women using them as shawls and the men dressed in capotes.

Courtesy of Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary, 1895, (CU176552) by Remington, Frederic (4 October 1861 - 26 December 1909) (author and illustrator).

Putting it All Together:
Building Your Family Pedigree Chart

Now that you've gathered all your research together, it's time to compile your family tree! The most effective and easy-to-read family tree format is a pedigree chart. The starting point for any pedigree chart is the researcher. Put yourself at the base and work backward through generations.

Pedigree chart pointers and techniques:

- Include up to five generations on each page, starting with yourself as the first generation.

- If you need to document more than five generations, begin a new page and indicate the ancestor you are continuing from.

- Individuals on your pedigree chart are numbered. You are always number 1, and the numbers increase from there. Men are even-numbered, and women are odd-numbered. For example, if you are number 1, your father will be 2, and your mother will be 3. Your father's father and mother will be 4 and 5, respectively, and your mother's parents will be 6 and 7.

- Use a pencil for the first draft of your family tree. You will be surprised how much can change as you learn more about your family history!

- It can be helpful to create an index of your ancestors that you keep with your family pedigree chart.

Key Term: Pedigree Chart

A pedigree chart is a type of family tree. It is a visual representation of a person's lineage that traces ancestry and family connections back through generations. A pedigree chart is typically orientated horizontally and is read from right to left, unlike other family trees that are represented vertically and read top to bottom.

Pedigree Chart

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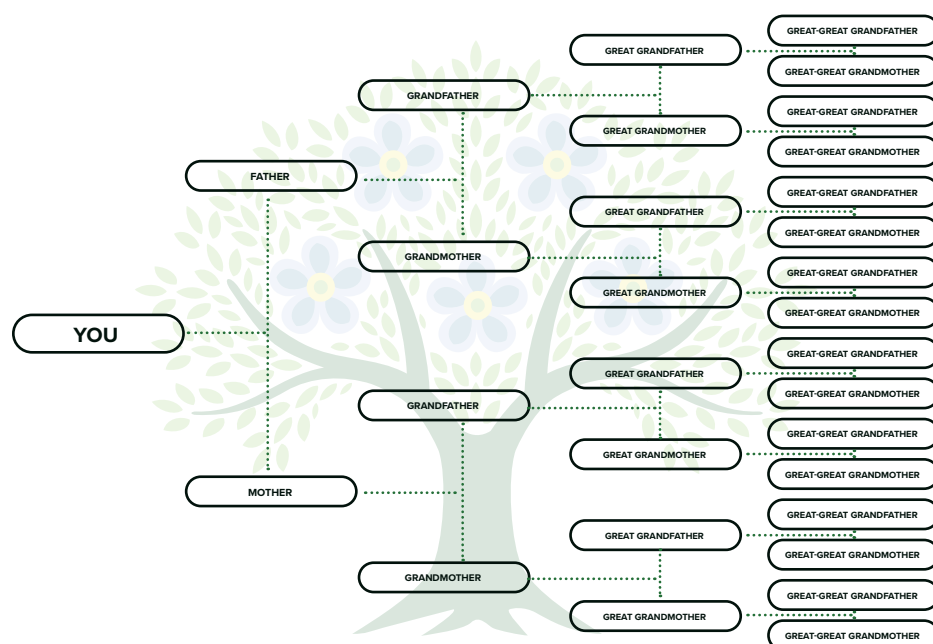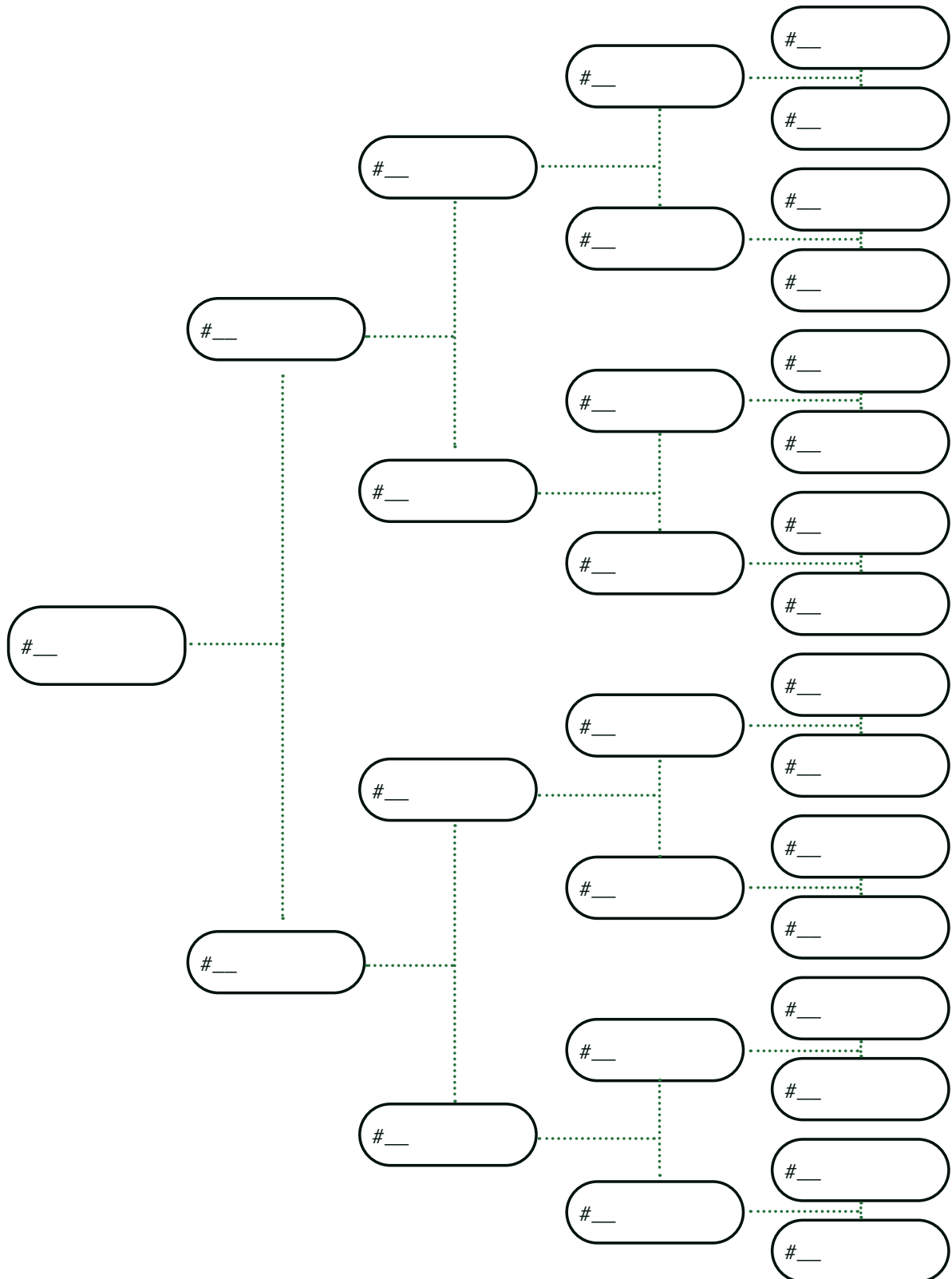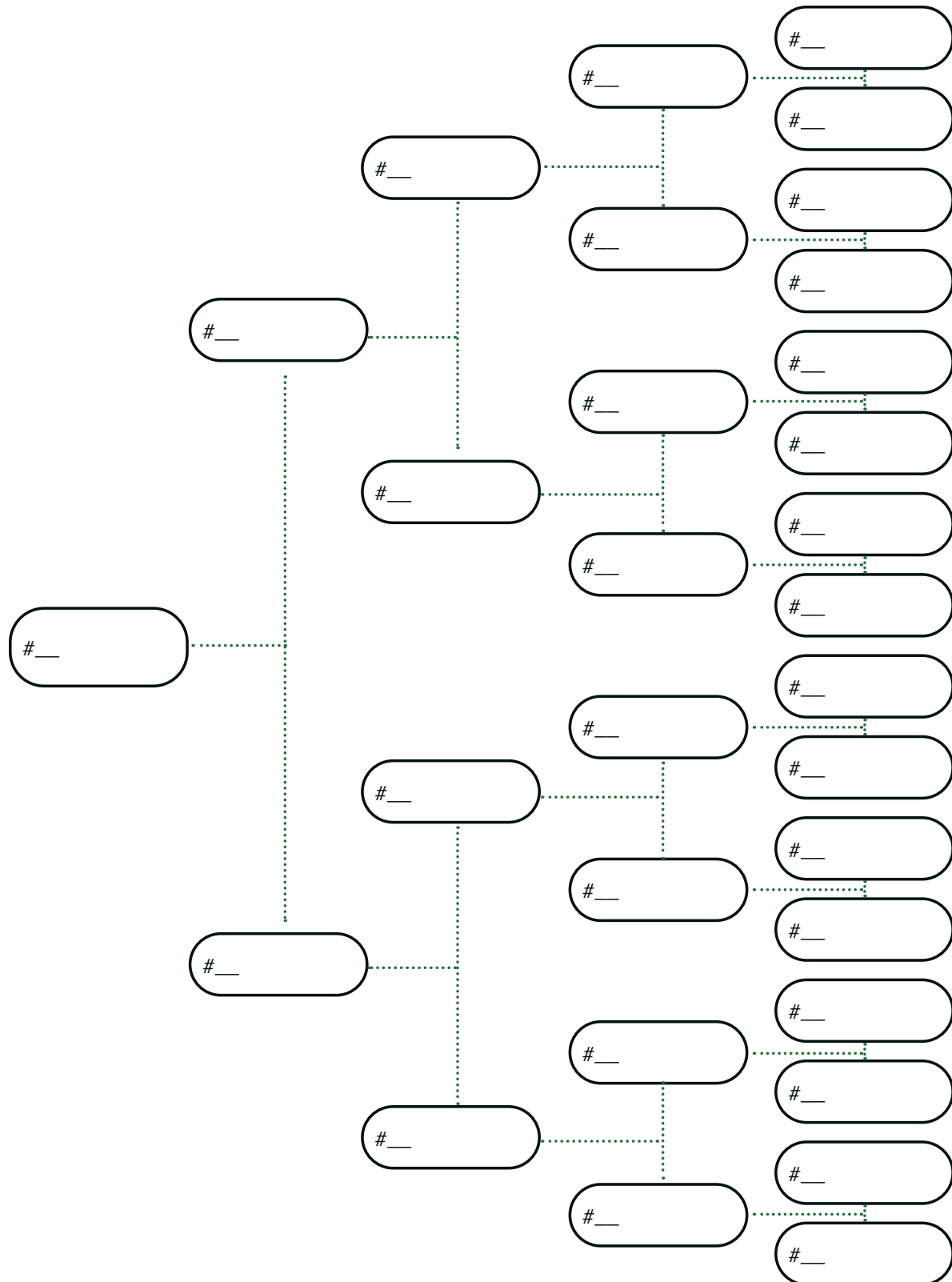
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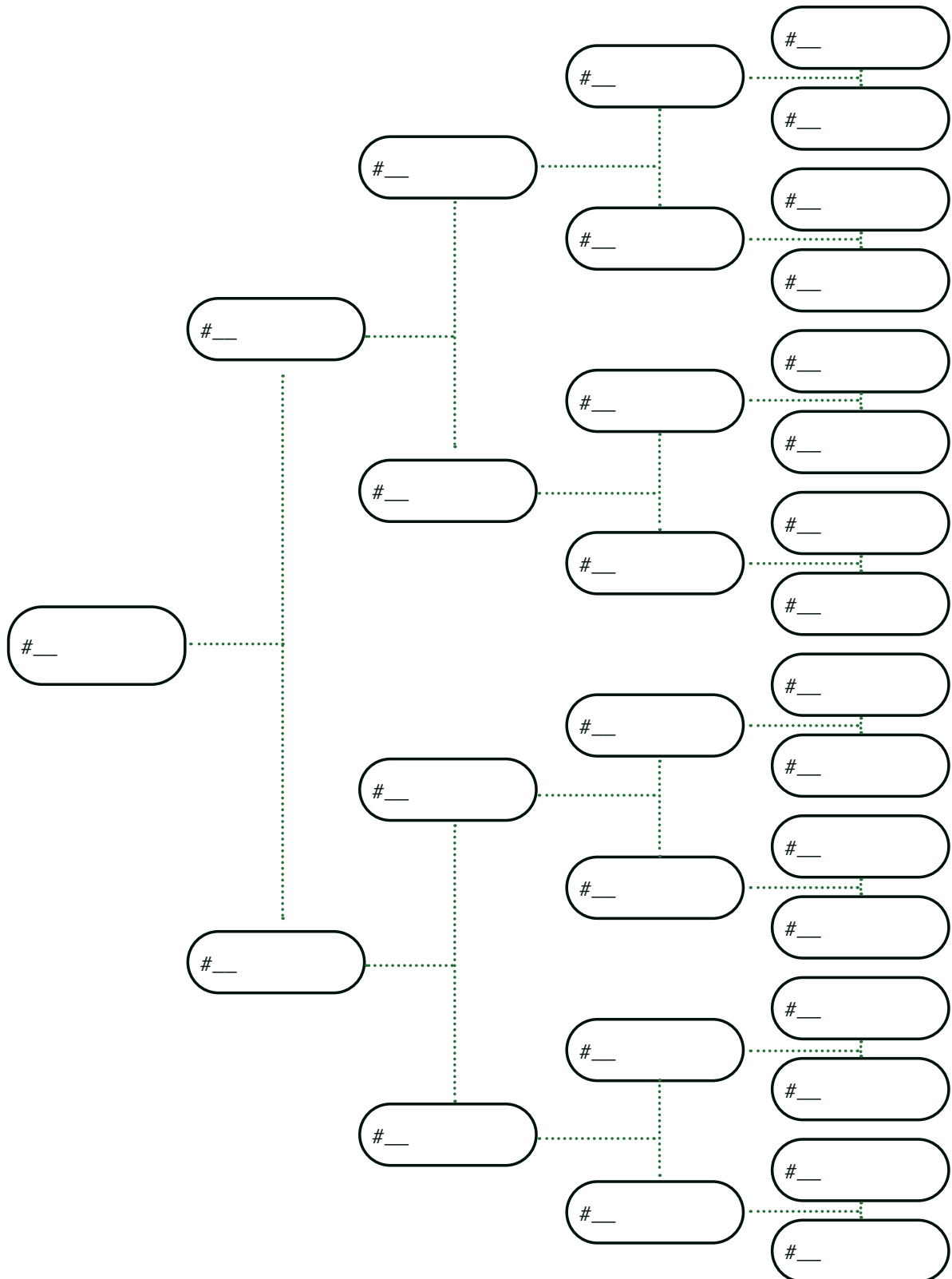
Pedigree Chart

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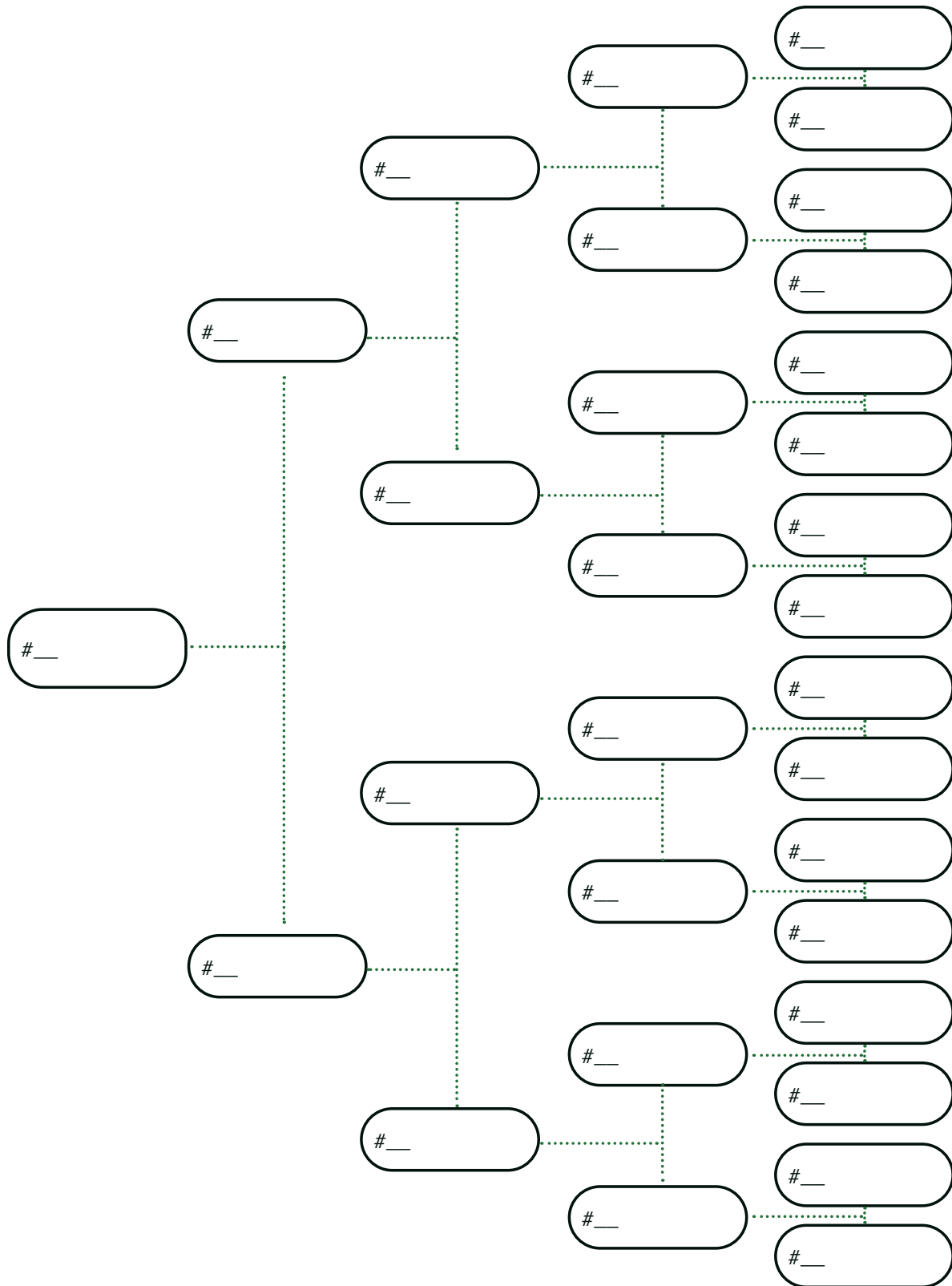
Ancestor Index

Keeping an index of your ancestors can be a helpful way to keep track of all the information you have, and it allows for quick and easy referencing. An index is not a detailed description of research – that is what a research log is for. An index is a simple list used to keep track of ancestor names, which can be grouped by family or region. Indexes can also be useful for keeping track of all documents related to a certain relative.

Ancestor Index

Researcher Name: _____

	ANCESTOR NAME	BIRTH DATE/LOCATION	DEATH DATE/LOCATION	RELATED DOCUMENTS	NOTES:
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

Ancestor Index

ANCESTOR NAME	BIRTH DATE/LOCATION	DEATH DATE/LOCATION	RELATED DOCUMENTS	NOTES:	
					9
					10
					11
					12
					13
					14
					15
					16
					17
					18
					19

Ancestor Index

	ANCESTOR NAME	BIRTH DATE/LOCATION	DEATH DATE/LOCATION	RELATED DOCUMENTS	NOTES:
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					
26					
27					
28					
29					
30					

Record Your Research Findings

Remember to write everything down!

There are many useful organizational tools you can use to record and document information you find during your research. These include:

- Research logs – A place to record where you have searched, what you have found, and to cite your sources

- Family pedigree charts – A visual way to record family lines and connections

- Correspondence logs – A way to record all communication that you've had with people or organizations in your genealogical research

- Family Group Records – A place to record information about sections of your family, including marriages, deaths, and births

This section provides more information about these tools, as well as templates you can use for your research.

A Métis family at their camp in Manitoba.

Courtesy Library and Archives Canada/ C - 001644

Dog trains were often used to transport goods over long distances. The dog-teams in this 1901 artwork by William Armstrong are leaving Fort Garry, Manitoba, and are bound for St. Paul Minnesota.

Courtesy of William Armstrong. William Armstrong fonds. Library and Archives Canada, e011161355

This illustration of a Métis camp near Fort Ellice, Manitoba was created sometime around 1882. You can see a Red River cart in the background.

Courtesy of Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary, (CU175243) by Unknown.

Research and Correspondence Log Templates

Use these templates to keep track of sources you have found and people you have contacted. It can also be a helpful way to keep track of documents you have found and to avoid repetitive research. It is easiest to keep track of this information as you go, so try not to save it all for the end. And make sure you record every source – you never know when some small piece of information will turn out to be useful!

Research logs come in a variety of formats, and different researchers prefer to keep track of information in different ways. This research log contains the following categories:

- **Researcher's name:** Your name. This helps future researchers verify your findings.

- **Ancestor's name/family line:** The name of the person or family line being researched.

- **Type of source:** Is this source a website, book, news article, photograph, etc?

- **Name of source:** Title of book, webpage, article, etc.

- **Date:** The date that you found/accessed this information.

- **Source description**: Author, date created, and page number.

- **Summary of information found in source:** What does this source tell you about your ancestor? Their date of birth? Where they lived? How many children they had?

- **Document number/location:** A number you create to keep track of this source and where it will be filed in your research.

- **Other comments or thoughts:** Does this source tell us anything else? Is it incomplete or contradictory to other sources? Does it bring up any other questions or surprises?

Correspondence logs keep track of people and places you have contacted during your research. Record as much contact information as you can, as well as the date you contacted this person/individual. It can also be helpful to note why you contacted a specific person or institution.

Research Log

Researcher Name: _____

	NAME OF SOURCE (book title, website, article name, etc)	DATE (when you retrieved the information)	LOCATION (call number, URL, page number)	TYPE OF SOURCE (webpage, book, map, photo, etc)
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Research Log

DESCRIPTION OF SOURCE (author, date created, page number)	INFORMATION IN SOURCE (what does this source say about your ancestor?)	DOCUMENT NUMBER (where you have filed this in your research)	OTHER COMMENTS/ THOUGHTS

Research Log

	TYPE OF SOURCE (webpage, book, map, photo, etc)	NAME OF SOURCE (book title, website, article name, etc)	DATE (when you retrieved the information)	LOCATION (call number, URL, page number)
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

Research Log

DESCRIPTION OF SOURCE (author, date created, page number)	INFORMATION IN SOURCE (what does this source say about your ancestor?)	DOCUMENT NUMBER (where you have filed this in your research)	OTHER COMMENTS/ THOUGHTS

Correspondence Log

Researcher Name: _____

	DATE	PERSON/ ORGANIZATION CONTACTED	CONTACT INFORMATION (name, email address etc)	PURPOSE	INFORMATION LEARNED	FOLLOW-UP DATE (if required)
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						

Correspondence Log

Researcher Name: _____

DATE	PERSON/ ORGANIZATION CONTACTED	CONTACT INFORMATION (name, email address etc)	PURPOSE	INFORMATION LEARNED	FOLLOW-UP DATE (if required)	
						6
						7
						8
						9
						10

Family Group Record Template

Family group records are a way to keep all the information you find about sections of your family, including marriages, deaths, and births together. Keeping information about family lines and groups together can clarify the story of your family as a whole.

Family Group Record

Surname or family line here: _____

ANCESTOR NAME: _____

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Other spouses:		
Occupations:		
	Father:	Mother:
Other Information:		
Children:		

ANCESTOR SPOUSE NAME: _____

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Other spouses:		
Occupations:		
	Father:	Mother:
Other Information:		
Children:		

Children:

NAME: _____

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Spouse:		
Occupations:		
Other Information:		

NAME: _____

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Spouse:		
Occupations:		
Other Information:		

NAME: _____

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Spouse:		
Occupations:		
Other Information:		

ANCESTOR NAME:

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Other spouses:		
Occupations:		
	Father:	Mother:
Other Information:		
Children:		

ANCESTOR SPOUSE NAME:

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Other spouses:		
Occupations:		
	Father:	Mother:
Other Information:		
Children:		

Children:

NAME: _____

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Spouse:		
Occupations:		
Other Information:		

NAME: _____

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Spouse:		
Occupations:		
Other Information:		

NAME: _____

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Spouse:		
Occupations:		
Other Information:		

ANCESTOR NAME:

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Other spouses:		
Occupations:		
	Father:	Mother:
Other Information:		
Children:		

ANCESTOR SPOUSE NAME:

	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Other spouses:		
Occupations:		
	Father:	Mother:
Other Information:		
Children:		

Children:

NAME:		
	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Spouse:		
Occupations:		
Other Information:		

NAME:		
	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Spouse:		
Occupations:		
Other Information:		

NAME:		
	Date:	Location:
Birth:		
Death:		
Marriage:		
Places of residence:		
Spouse:		
Occupations:		
Other Information:		

Map Building Template

The Métis were traditionally a semi-nomadic people who moved freely around their homelands following the buffalo herds throughout the year. Movements of people and communities were also linked to events connected to the history of the Métis Nation, like the Red River Resistance, the Northwest Resistance, dispossession of lands, and the destruction of road allowance communities.

Use the map on the following page to visually chart your family's location and migrations throughout history. We've included some sites that are significant to the Métis, but your family may be connected to other or different locations as well. Mark areas associated with your family history with a star, circle, or other symbol of your choosing.

Locations

1. Fort Vancouver	23. Lewistown
2. Fort Victoria	24. Île-à-la-Crosse
3. Fort Langley	25. Meadow Lake
4. Fort St. James	26. Green Lake
5. Fort St. John	27. Wood Mountain
6. Kelly Lake	28. Fish Creek
7. Fort Steele	29. Batoche
8. Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement	30. Duck Lake
9. Peavine Métis Settlement	31. St-Laurent-Grandin
10. East Prairie Métis Settlement	32. Prince Albert
11. Gift Lake Métis Settlement	33. Cumberland House
12. Buffalo Lake Métis Settlement	34. Qu'Appelle
13. Lac la Biche	35. Fort Qu'Appelle
14. Kikino Métis Settlement	36. St-Lazare
15. Lac Ste. Anne	37. Brandon House
16. St. Albert	38. Turtle Mountain
17. Fort Edmonton	39. Portage la Prairie
18. Rocky Mountain House	40. Pembina
19. Saint Paul	41. Fort Garry
20. Fishing Lake Métis Settlement	42. Rooster Town
21. Elizabeth Métis Settlement	43. Fort Douglas
22. Cypress Hills	44. Frog Plain
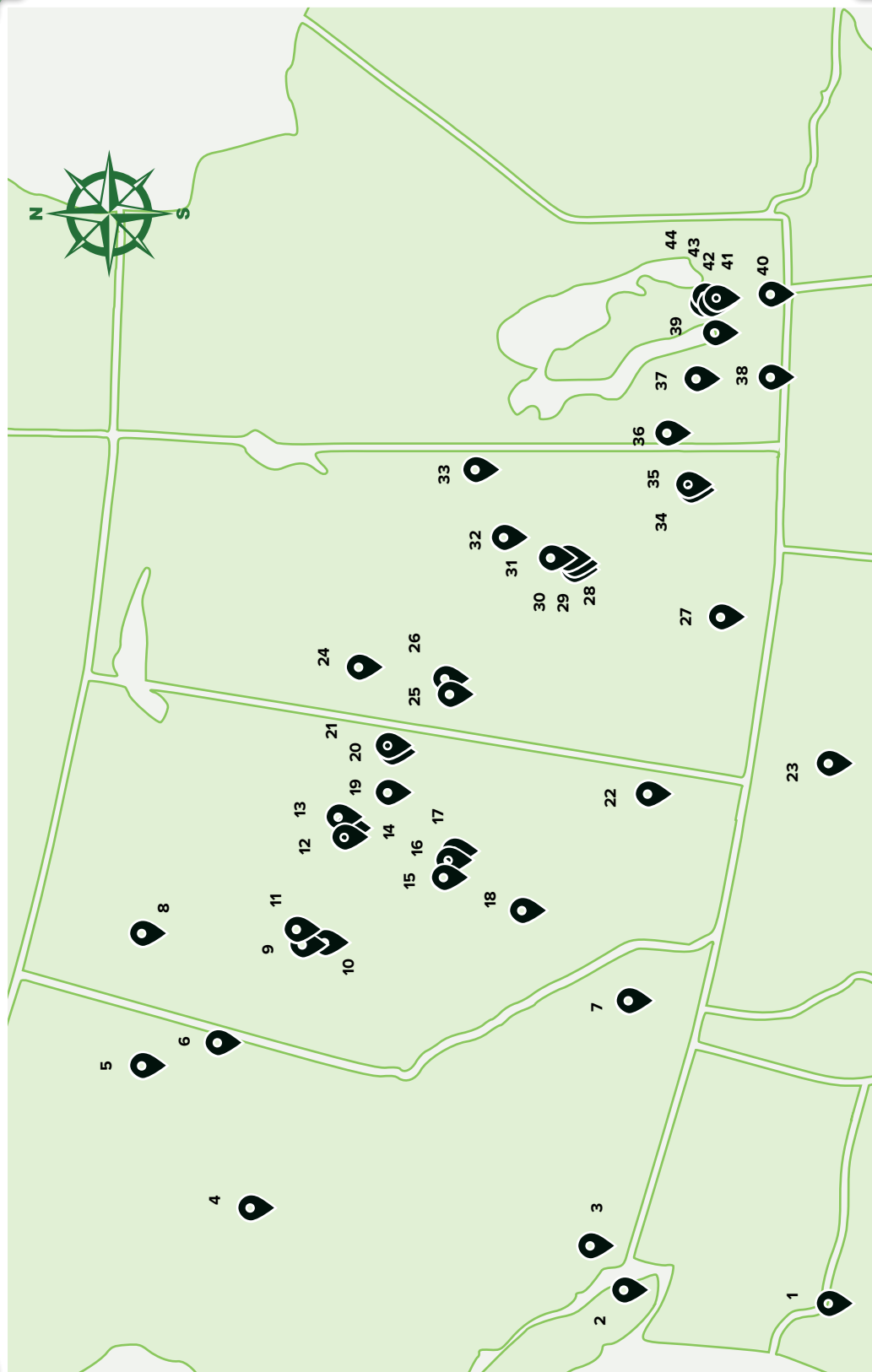
Ancestor Locations

Use this chart to record any locations associated with your family history. You can include stories of interesting people, important events, and family stories linked to these places.

	LOCATION	CONNECTION TO YOUR FAMILY HISTORY	NOTES
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Research Notes