1.4 Red River Resistance, Northwest Resistance

Red River Before the Resistance



***Script**

S1 In 1869, the Metis lived at Red River.

S2 The Metis people : They are measuring our land. We were not asked.

S3 The Metis feared losing their land and rights.

S4 The Metis people : We must defend our rights.

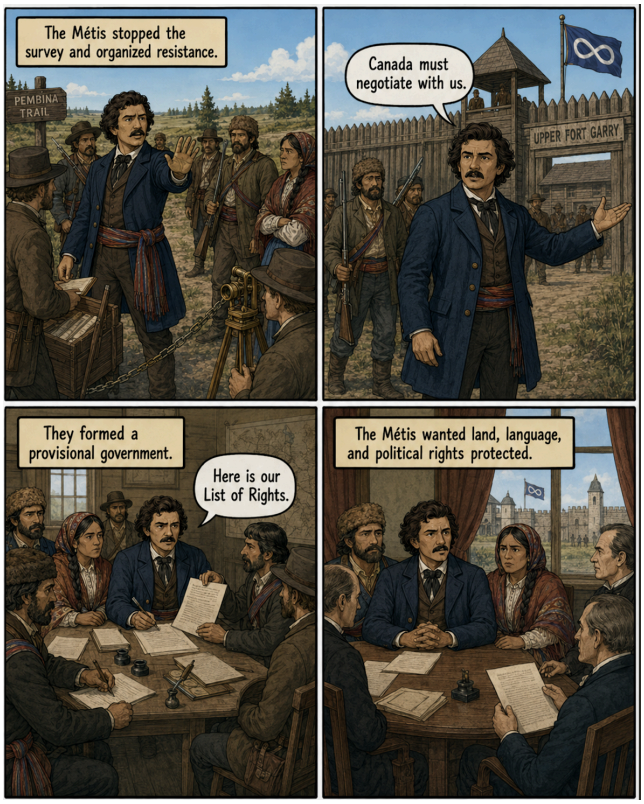
Vocab	Easy Definition
Red River Settlement	a community in present-day Manitoba where many Métis lived
Métis	a distinct Indigenous people with their own culture, history, and communities

river lot	a long, narrow farm that stretches back from a river
surveyor	a person who measures land
land rights	legal rights to use, own, or control land
consulted	asked for opinions before a decision is made

Easy Explanation:

In 1869, many Métis families lived in the **Red River Settlement**. Their farms were organized in long **river lots**. When Canadian surveyors entered the area and began measuring land, Métis residents became worried. They had not been properly consulted, and they feared that Canada's new land system could threaten their farms and rights.

The Red River Resistance Begins



***Script**

S1 The Metis stopped the survey and organized resistance.

S2 Canada must negotiate with us.

S3 They formed a provisional government.

Person 1 : Here is our list of rights.

S4 The Metis wanted land, language, and political rights protected.

Vocab	Easy Definition
resistance	organized action against control or unfair change
provisional government	a temporary government created during a political crisis
Upper Fort Garry	an important fort and political centre in the Red River Settlement
negotiate	to discuss a problem in order to reach an agreement

List of Rights	a document explaining the rights and protections the Métis wanted
political rights	rights connected to government and representation

Easy Explanation:
Louis Riel and other Métis leaders stopped Canadian surveyors and organized resistance. They took control of **Upper Fort Garry** and formed a **provisional government**. The goal was not simply to fight Canada. They wanted Canada to **negotiate** with them first. They created a **List of Rights** asking for protection of land, language, religion, and political representation.

The Manitoba Act and Unfinished Promises



***Script**

S1 In 1870, negotiations led to the Manitoba Act.

S2 Our rights are recognized in Manitoba.

S3 But Metis land promises were delayed and disputed.

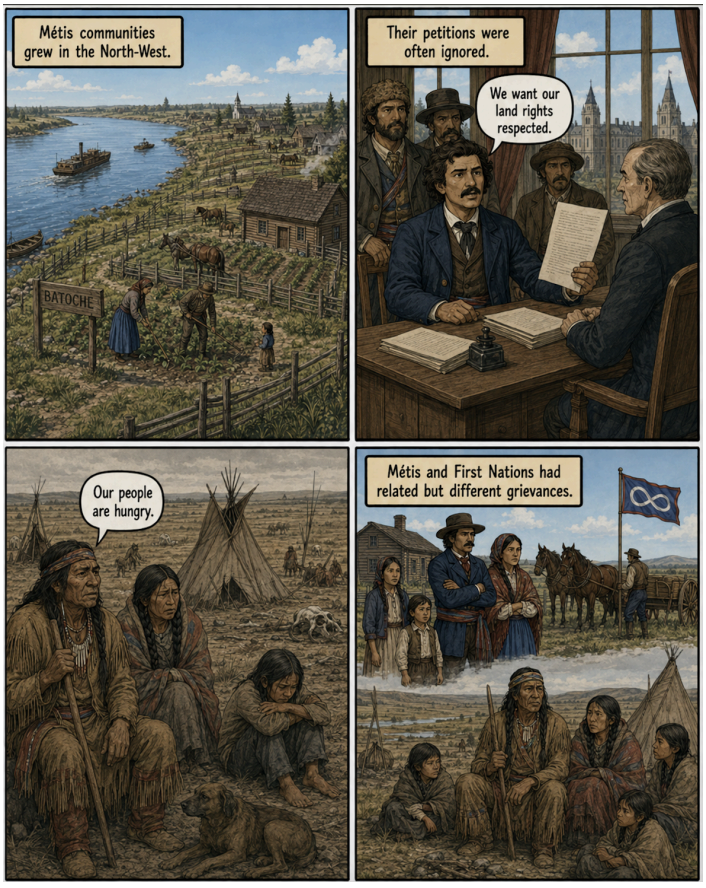
S4 Many Metis moved farther west.

Vocab	Easy Definition
Manitoba Act	the 1870 law that created the province of Manitoba
negotiation	discussion used to reach an agreement
province	a major political region within Canada
recognize	to officially accept or protect something
land promise	a government promise about land ownership or land rights

disputed	argued about or not fully agreed on

Easy Explanation:
Negotiations between the Métis provisional government and Canada helped produce the **Manitoba Act of 1870**. Manitoba became a province, and the Act included protections for some Métis rights. However, many land promises were delayed or poorly carried out. As more settlers arrived, many Métis families felt pressure and moved farther west.

Problems Grow in the North-West



***Script**

S1 Metis communities grew in the North-West.

S2 Their petitions were often ignored.

Person 1 : We want our land rights respected.

S3 Our people are hungry.

S4 Metis and First nations had related but different grievances.

Vocab	Easy Definition
North-West	the western territories of Canada before provinces such as Saskatchewan were created
petition	a formal written request to the government
grievance	a complaint about unfair treatment

treaty	a formal agreement between governments or nations
buffalo decline	the disappearance of large buffalo herds from the Plains
First Nations	Indigenous peoples in Canada who are not Métis or Inuit

Easy Explanation:
Métis communities later grew in the **North-West**, especially around Batoche. They again faced problems with land surveys and legal land ownership. They sent **petitions** to the Canadian government, but their concerns were often ignored. At the same time, many **First Nations** communities faced hunger, the disappearance of the buffalo, and problems connected to treaty promises. Their grievances were connected to western expansion, but they were not exactly the same as Métis grievances.

Louis Riel Returns in 1884



***Script**

S1 Metis leaders near Batoche asked Louis Riel to return and help.

Metis leaders : Please come back and help us, Louis Riel.

S2 Louis Riel returned in 1884.

S3 We want land, representation, and justice.

S4 When the petition failed, the crisis grew.

Vocab	Easy Definition
Batoche	an important Métis community in present-day Saskatchewan
representation	having people speak for you in government
justice	fair treatment under laws and government
petition	a written request asking the government to act

crisis	a serious and dangerous problem
return	to come back to a place

Easy Explanation:

Métis leaders near **Batoche** asked Louis Riel to return and help them. Riel came back in **1884**. He and local leaders continued to send petitions asking for land rights, political representation, and fair treatment. When the government still did not respond adequately, frustration increased and the political crisis became more serious.

The North-West Resistance Begins



***Script**

S1 In 1885, the Metis formed another provisional government.

S2 We must defend our community.

S3 At Duck Lake, Metis fighters won an early battle.

S4 Now the conflict has become war.

Vocab	Easy Definition
North-West Resistance	the 1885 conflict involving Métis resistance and some First Nations fighting against Canadian forces
provisional government	a temporary government formed during a crisis
Gabriel Dumont	an important Métis military leader during the 1885 Resistance

Duck Lake	the location of an early battle in the North-West Resistance
military leader	a person who directs fighters or soldiers
armed conflict	fighting involving weapons

Easy Explanation:
In **1885**, Métis leaders formed another **provisional government**. Louis Riel became an important political leader, while **Gabriel Dumont** helped lead the military resistance. At **Duck Lake**, Métis fighters won an early battle against government forces. At this point, the conflict had changed from petitions and political protest into open armed resistance.

First Nations and the Wider Conflict



***Script**

S1 Many First Nations also faced hunger and broken promises.

S2 Indigenous people : The buffalo are gone, and our people are suffering.

S3 Some First Nations took part in the fighting.

S4 Indigenous people : Not every nation chose the same path.

Vocab	Easy Definition
treaty promise	something the government agreed to provide under a treaty
buffalo	large animals that were central to the lives of many Plains First Nations
hunger	not having enough food
hardship	a serious difficulty or suffering
participate	to take part in something

nation	a distinct Indigenous political and cultural community

Easy Explanation:
Many First Nations communities were also suffering because buffalo herds had disappeared and government support was often inadequate. Some First Nations people took part in fighting during the 1885 conflict. However, **not every First Nation made the same choice**. Some leaders resisted Canadian forces, while others tried to stay out of the fighting. It is important not to treat all First Nations as one single group.

The Battle of Batoche



***Script**

S1 The railway helped Canadian troops move west quickly.

S2 Hold your ground at Batoche.

S3 Person 1 : We are running out of ammunition.

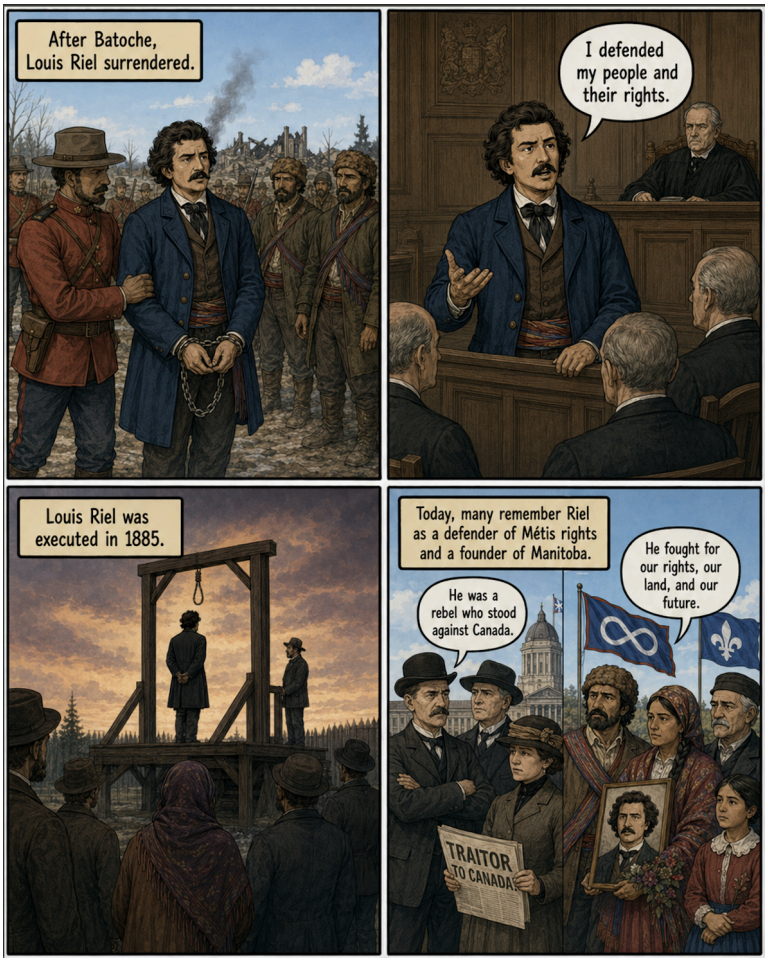
S4 Batoche fell in May 1885.

Vocab	Easy Definition
railway	a system of tracks used by trains
Canadian troops	soldiers sent by the Canadian government
rifle pit	a defensive hole or trench used by fighters
ammunition	bullets and other supplies used in weapons

defend	to protect a place from attack
Batoche	the main Métis centre and site of the decisive battle in 1885

Easy Explanation:
The Canadian government used the **railway** to move soldiers west much faster than it could during the Red River Resistance. Métis fighters defended **Batoche** using rifle pits and local knowledge. Gabriel Dumont helped direct the defense. However, the defenders began to run out of **ammunition**. Canadian troops eventually broke through, and Batoche fell in May 1885.

Riel's Surrender, Trial, and Legacy



***Script**

S1 After Batoche, Louis Riel surrendered.

S2 I defended my people and their rights.

S3 Louis Riel was executed in 1885.

S4 Today, many remember Riel as a defender of Metis rights and a founder of Manitoba.

Person 1 : He was a rebel who stood against Canada.

Person 2 : He fought for our rights, our land, and our future.

Vocab	Easy Definition
surrender	to stop fighting and give yourself to the enemy
treason	a serious crime of acting against your country or government

trial	a legal process used to decide if someone is guilty
execute	to kill someone as a legal punishment
legacy	the way a person or event is remembered later
founder	a person who helped create something important

Easy Explanation:
After Batoche fell, **Louis Riel surrendered** to Canadian authorities. He was tried for **treason** and argued that he had defended Métis people and their rights. Riel was found guilty and **executed in 1885**. His death deeply divided Canada. Today, many people remember him as a defender of Métis rights and an important figure in the creation of Manitoba, while his actions remain part of a complex historical debate.

Final Summary

Easy explanation

Canada's westward expansion threatened Métis land, political representation, language rights, and local control.

In 1869, Métis leaders under Louis Riel stopped Canadian surveyors, formed a provisional government, and negotiated with Canada.

Those negotiations led to the **Manitoba Act, 1870**, which created Manitoba and recognized important rights, but many Métis land promises were delayed or poorly carried out.

Many Métis families moved farther west, where similar land problems continued.

By the 1880s, Métis communities near Batoche were again asking the Canadian government to respect their land rights and political demands.

At the same time, many First Nations faced hunger, the disappearance of the buffalo, and serious problems connected to treaty promises and government policy.

Louis Riel returned in 1884, and when petitions failed, the conflict became armed resistance in 1885.

Métis forces won an early battle at Duck Lake, but Canadian troops used the railway to move west quickly and defeated the resistance at Batoche.

Riel surrendered, was convicted of treason, and was executed in 1885.

Today, the Red River and North-West Resistances are important for understanding Métis rights, Canadian expansion, and the effects of government policy on Indigenous peoples.

Check Your Understanding

1. Why were the Métis worried when Canadian surveyors entered Red River in 1869?

_____

_____

2. Why did Louis Riel and the Métis form a provisional government?

3. What did the Manitoba Act of 1870 accomplish, and what problems remained?

4. Why did many Métis move farther west after 1870?

5. How were Métis and First Nations grievances in the North-West related but different?

6. Why did the North-West Resistance become an armed conflict in 1885?

7. Why was the railway important during the North-West Resistance?

8. Was Louis Riel only a rebel against Canada, or also a defender of Métis rights? Use two facts.

Teacher Answer Key

1. The Métis feared that Canadian surveys would ignore their existing river-lot farms and threaten their land, language, and political rights.

2. They formed a provisional government so Canada would have to negotiate with them before taking full control of Red River. They wanted their rights and local interests protected.

3. The Manitoba Act created the province of Manitoba and recognized important protections involving language, schools, representation, and Métis land. However, many land promises were delayed, disputed, or poorly implemented.

4. Many Métis lost confidence that their land rights would be protected, while more settlers moved into Manitoba. As a result, many Métis families moved west to places such as present-day Saskatchewan.

5. Both groups faced pressure from Canadian expansion and government policy. Métis concerns focused strongly on land title, surveys, and political representation, while many First Nations also faced treaty problems, hunger, reserve restrictions, and the disappearance of the buffalo.

6. Métis petitions and negotiations failed to solve their concerns. In 1885, they formed another provisional government, and fighting began after clashes such as the Battle of Duck Lake.

7. The railway allowed the Canadian government to move troops west much faster than during the Red River Resistance. This gave Canada a major military advantage.

8. Strong answers should recognize both perspectives. Riel challenged Canadian authority and led provisional governments, but he also fought for Métis land rights, political representation, language rights, and local control. He also helped negotiate the creation of Manitoba.

Sources used for fact-checking

Parks Canada — **150th Anniversary of the Red River Resistance** (Parks Canada)

Parks Canada — **Riel House National Historic Site: Historic Themes** (Parks Canada)

Batoche National Historic Site: History of the North-West Resistance (Parks Canada)

Government of Canada — **Indigenous Peoples and the North-West Resistance**