

RUPERTSLAND CENTRE  
FOR MÉTIS RESEARCH



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
FACULTY OF NATIVE STUDIES



Métis Archival  
Project



# MÉTIS SCRIP IN ALBERTA

RUPERTSLAND CENTRE FOR MÉTIS RESEARCH IN  
COLLABORATION WITH THE MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA



The research for this booklet was carried out by the Rupertsland Centre for Métis Research (RCMR), housed within the Faculty of Native Studies, University of Alberta, under the supervision of Dr. Nathalie Kermoal, Associate Dean Academic, Director of RCMR and relies upon the previous research completed by Dr. Frank Tough and the Métis Archival Project (MAP) Laboratory. Tough advised, edited and assisted with the compilation of this booklet. The documents for this project have been provided through the MAP Laboratory, under the supervision of Tough, who digitized and catalogued many of the Métis scrip records housed at Library and Archives Canada.

This booklet has been prepared for the Métis Nation of Alberta Annual General Assembly (August 10-12, 2018) by Nathalie Kermoal, Frank Tough, Jenn Rossiter and Leah Hrycun, with an overview of the New Framework Agreement by Jason Madden and Zachary Davis. Thank you to Lorne Gladue, Frank Tough and Zachary Davis for their feedback on this document.

The views and ideas expressed herein are solely those of the creators and do not necessarily represent the views of the Métis Nation of Alberta, RCMR, the Faculty of Native Studies, MAP Laboratory, the University of Alberta, or Pape Salter Teillet LLP.



Interior of Scrip commission tent at Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta. 1899.  
Source: Glenbow Archives (NA-949-22).

**Front Cover:** Metis meeting with Scrip Commission at Fort Dunvegan, Alberta. 1899.  
Source: Glenbow Archives (NA-949-28).

This booklet provides an overview of “Half-breed Scrip” in what is now Alberta and will provide a brief history of Half-breed Scrip, its meaning and its origins. The underlying reason why the federal government issued Half-breed Scrip was explained by Prime Minister (1896–1911) Wilfrid Laurier:

*We determined at the outset, when we acquired the territory of the Hudson Bay Company [sic], that we would treat the halfbreeds as we would the Indians – that is, as first occupants of the soil. It has been the policy of the British Government from time immemorial not to take possession of any lands without having in some way settled with the first occupants and giving them compensation...<sup>1</sup>*

To do this, the federal government made Treaties with First Nations and granted scrip to the Métis.



**FIGURE 1** Scrip Coupon for 160 Acres issued to Andrew McAuley. Source: LAC RG15, Vol. 1408.

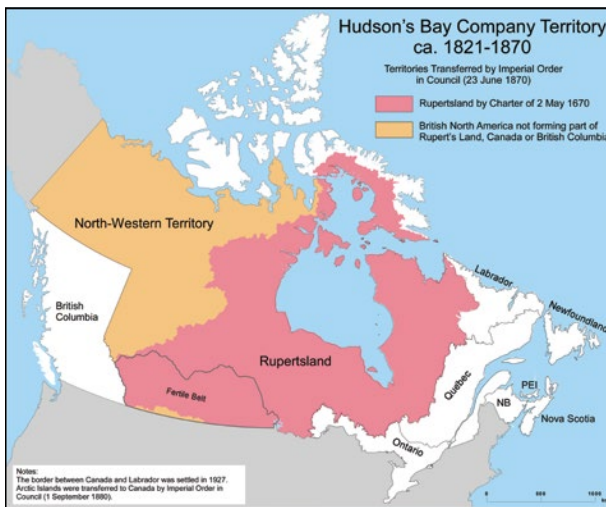
The federal government sent several Scrip Commissions to what is now Alberta between 1885 and 1908. Relatively little is known about this history of scrip. By focusing on the community of Lac La Biche,<sup>2</sup> this booklet provides an overview of land scrip<sup>3</sup> in what is currently Alberta.

1 Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 4<sup>th</sup> Session, Vol 2 (3 July 1899) at column 6418.

2 Legal counsel, Zachary Davis, suggested Lac La Biche as an example for the pamphlet due to the MNA’s 90<sup>th</sup> Annual General Assembly of August 2018 being held in this location.

3 Land scrip is focused on over money scrip because the process of assigning land scrip coupons to third parties is better documented in the archival sources.

**WHY WAS SCRIP NECESSARY?** Westward expansion was one of Canada’s primary goals following Confederation in 1867. Rumours that Canada would annex Rupertsland<sup>4</sup> unsettled the Métis, as they feared their rights to the land would not be respected. In 1869, the federal government sent surveyors to the Red River Settlement to survey the land. There, they met an armed Métis resistance. Under the leadership of Louis Riel, the Métis formed a provisional government and negotiated for their rights. As a result, when Canada was acquiring Rupertsland in 1870, it made promises to the Métis people living in Red River. 1.4 million acres of land was to be set aside for the “Half-breed” children born prior to July 15, 1870 in the original province of Manitoba. Each child was to receive the equivalent of 240 acres of land and later it was decided that heads of household (i.e. parents) were to receive the equivalent of \$160 in scrip. Canada, however, failed to implement this policy diligently and few Métis actually benefitted from it. The purpose of this promise—to give the Métis children a head start over the expected influx of settlers from the east—was never realized.



**FIGURE 2** Map of Hudson’s Bay Company Territory, ca. 1831-1870. Source: Frank J. Tough and Erik Ellehoj (Cartographer).

The *1870 Order*, the constitutional document that transferred Rupertsland to Canada, committed the federal government to addressing the land claims of “Indians”. The federal government intended to open land for agricultural settlement. Special land grants for railways, schools, and the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) were also approved. However, before the settlement of Rupertsland could go ahead, the federal government would have to deal with the land claims of the Indigenous peoples, including the Métis.

<sup>4</sup> The name Rupertsland (as opposed to Rupert’s Land) will be used throughout this booklet, except where specifically required when referring to legislation or a direct quote.

**SCRIP COMMISSIONS IN ALBERTA:** On March 30, 1885, the federal government made steps to issue scrip to the Métis in the North-West Territories. However, as in Manitoba, those born after July 15, 1870 (the date the Rupertsland transfer was effective) were not eligible to receive scrip. The Applications for scrip in Alberta began in southern (Calgary and Fort McLeod and surrounding areas) and central Alberta (Edmonton and surrounding areas) in 1885 and 1886. At this time, none of the Métis in areas north of the Treaty 6 boundary were eligible for scrip because the federal government had not yet made steps to open that land for development.

**FIGURE 3** Map of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories and the Activities of the Scrip Commissions 1885-1925. Source: The Atlas of Saskatchewan Millennium Edition. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan Press. 1999, Map reproduced by Elise Pietroniro, GIServices, University of Saskatchewan 2005; Source data provided by Frank Tough, University of Alberta.



The Métis in Alberta petitioned the federal government to remove the requirement that an individual had to be born before July 15, 1870 in order to receive scrip. In 1899, Treaty 8 was signed with First Nations bands and between 1899 and 1908, scrip commissions and other officials visited communities in Northern Alberta to take applications for Métis scrip. For Treaty 8, those born before the Treaty was signed at Lesser Slave Lake were eligible to apply for scrip. Moreover, those that had been denied scrip because of the July 15, 1870 birthdate cut-off could apply for scrip under the new cut-off date of December 31, 1885. Because of this change in eligibility, several scrip commissions visited communities in Central and Southern Alberta (FIGURE 3).

**WHAT IS SCRIP?** The word scrip refers to “any various documents used as evidence that the holder or bearer is entitled to receive something [such as ... an allotment of land].”<sup>5</sup> Métis Scrip, or “Half-breed” scrip, as it is officially known, was given to the Métis people (male or female) by the Government of Canada to address Métis claims to land. Métis scrip was issued either as money scrip (\$160 or \$240) or land scrip (equivalent to a 160 acre quarter-section of land or a 160 acre quarter-section plus ½ of a quarter section for a total of 240 acres), both of which were to be used to acquire lands surveyed for homesteads.

**FIGURE 4** Land Scrip Coupon A7010 issued to Elizabeth McKay, born at Kinosota on June 7, 1874, daughter of Angus McLeod and Mary Ducharme, for 160 Acres  
Source: LAC RG15, Vol. 1408.



**FIGURE 5** Money Scrip Coupon A5489 issued to Magliore Meraste, minor child of Philip Meraste, for \$80.00, granted June 10, 1908.  
Source: LAC RG15, Vol. 1398.

Though similar, money scrip and land scrip had important differences. Money scrip was issued in dollars and could be used toward the acquisition of homestead lands. Land scrip was issued in acres and could be directly exchanged for homestead lands (i.e. 1 acre of land scrip = 1 acre of homestead land).

<sup>5</sup> “Scrip.” Merriam-Webster.com. Merriam-Webster, n.d. June 6, 2018.

The *Dominion Lands Act* (1872) provided the federal government with the power to allocate a variety of land and resource tenures in Western Canada. Many categories of land grants were created including homesteads acquired by scrip. To obtain a homestead, any head of household (male or female) or any male over the age of 18 years could pay a \$10 administrative fee for entry to a 160-acre parcel of land.

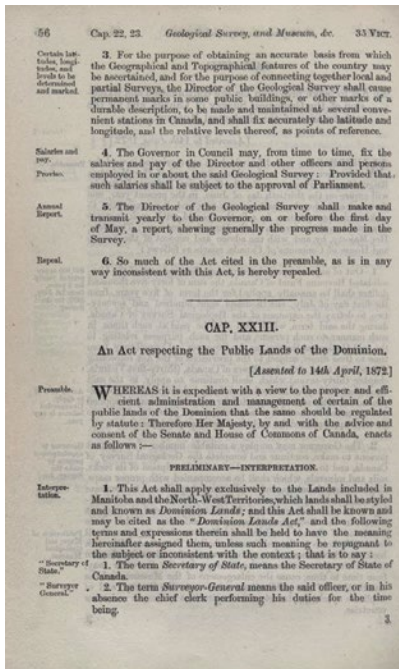
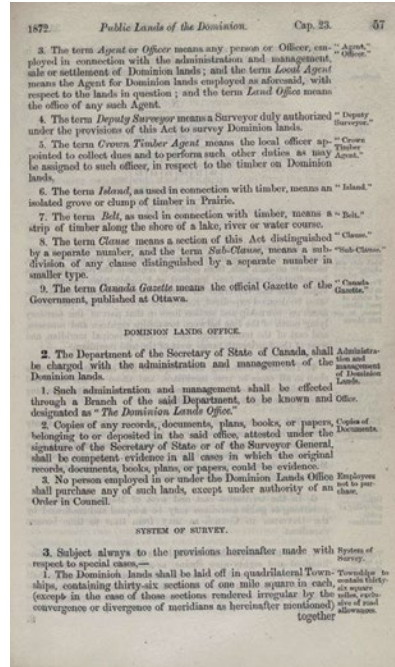


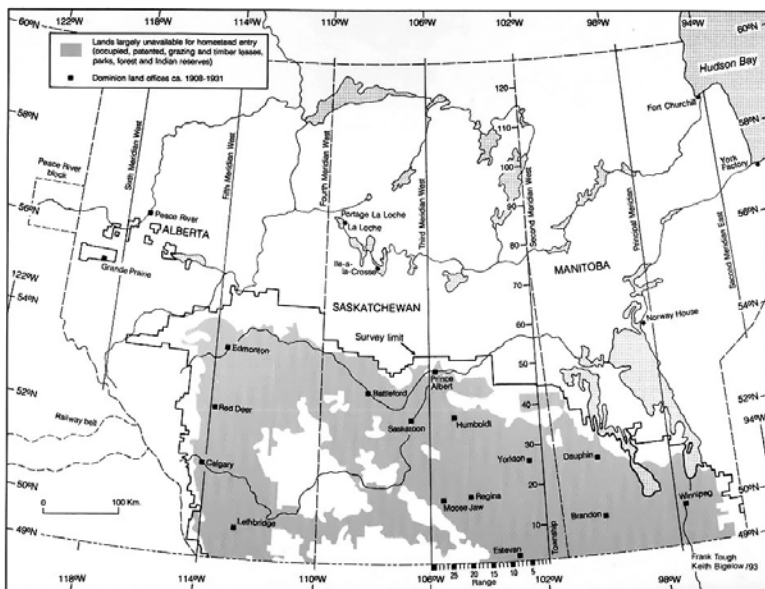
FIGURE 6 *Dominion Lands Act*, 1872.



Paying the \$10 administrative fee was only the beginning of the homestead process, as homesteaders needed to complete a written application and complete certain conditions to receive ownership of their land. Although the specific conditions varied over time, some of the basic requirements were that the homesteader live on the land for three consecutive years and bring land under cultivation. In other words, homesteaders invested their labour and capital into "improving the land." Once the local Land Agent was satisfied the conditions were met, the homesteader could make an application to receive letters patent granting the right to obtain title to their land.

The conditions homesteaders had to abide by did not apply to those individuals who acquired dominion lands by land scrip or money scrip. By using scrip, homestead land could be acquired without meeting standard normal homestead requirements.

To use a land scrip coupon, the grantee (the individual named on the coupon) needed to appear in person at the Dominion Lands Office responsible for administering the nearby homestead lands that he or she wanted to acquire with their coupons. Dominion Lands Offices were located in cities and towns across the prairies and each was responsible for administering homestead lands in a region. For example, if an individual wanted to purchase homestead lands near Lethbridge, they would need to appear in person at the Lethbridge Dominion Lands Office to exchange their land scrip coupons for an application for letters patent to homestead lands. To use money scrip, anyone who came to a Dominion Lands Office with a money scrip coupon could use it to purchase lands in that area. However, some homestead lands were valued at more than \$1 per acre. There was no requirement to have the Métis scrip grantee appear in person to make use of money scrip. Consequently, anyone in possession of the money scrip coupons (i.e. speculators, homesteaders) could select and purchase Dominion Lands.

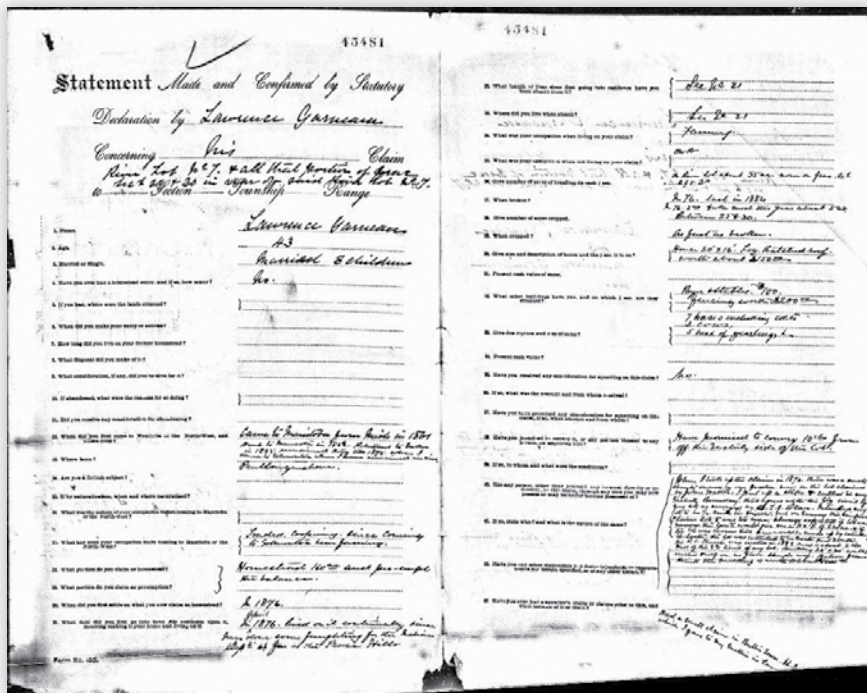


**FIGURE 7** Map Showing Dominion Land Offices ca. 1908–1931. Source: Frank J. Tough and Keith Bigelow, 1993 in Frank J. Tough and Leah Dorion, “the claims of the Half-breeds ... have been finally closed”: A Study of Treaty Ten and Treaty Five Adhesion Scrip,” for The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. October, 1993.



Scrip and homestead are sometimes confused because all of the lands available for acquisition were administered through the *Dominion Lands Act* and by the Dominion Lands Agencies. Homesteaders and scrip coupon holders had to travel to the same offices to acquire lands and had to choose their land from the same available quarter sections. Both homesteaders and scrip holders had the same goal of obtaining letters patent that would establish a right to obtain title to their lands.

In addition to scrip, Métis could also obtain land through the homestead system. Some Métis individuals applied for homestead as soon as lands were open for settlement and later applied for scrip when it was available to them. Other Métis individuals transferred their scrip coupons to a third party (for example, a real estate investor) and later applied for homestead. Both scrip and homestead involved large amounts of paperwork.



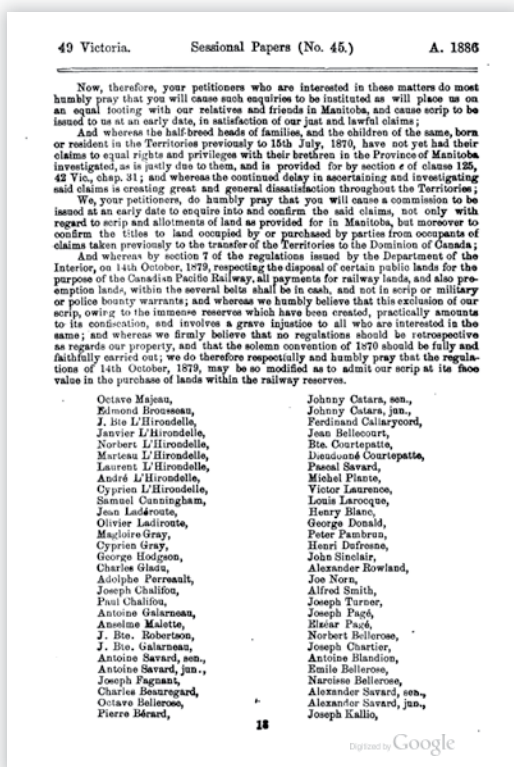
**FIGURE 8** Homestead Application of Lawrence Garneau for River Lot 7, Edmonton Settlement. Source: PAA 1970.313, Reel 2001, File 43481.

**MÉTIS PETITIONS:** Whether through homestead, scrip or some other way, the Métis in present day Alberta wanted to protect their rights to their land. The transfer of Rupertsland to the Dominion of Canada meant the land was under the federal legislation framework provided in the *Dominion Lands Act* and as a result, the Métis had to work within the framework of that Act to protect their rights. Under the *Dominion Lands Act* only land officially surveyed by the Dominion Lands surveyors was opened for homestead. Surveyors made attempts to ensure land that was previously occupied was in the name of the rightful occupant, but those living on unsurveyed land were technically viewed as squatters and their rights to the land they occupied were not certain.

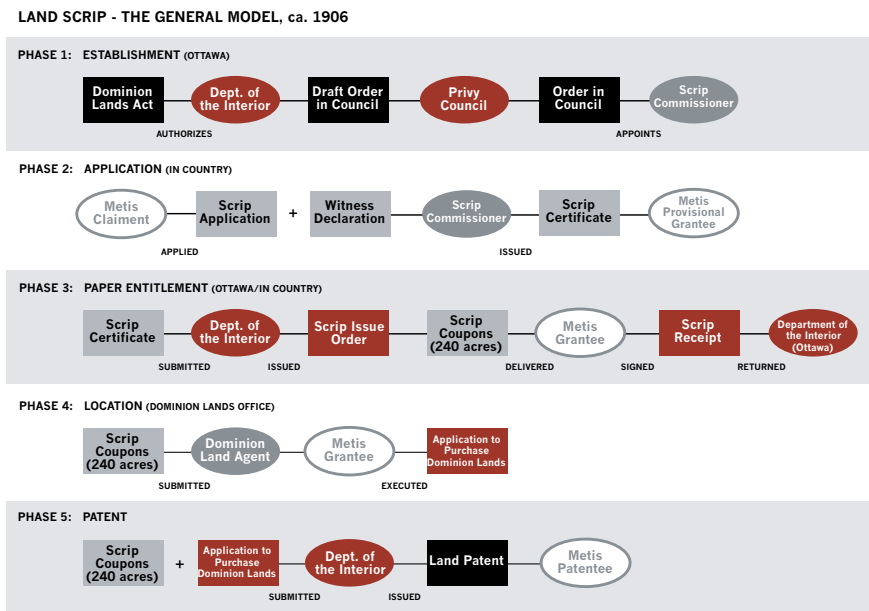
In Alberta, the Métis petitioned the government for land rights many times. In 1877, the Métis at Blackfoot Crossing petitioned the government for farm implements, seeds and assistance to settle the land. In 1878, the Métis at Cypress Hills petitioned the government for land in the form of a reserve. In 1880, the Métis at Edmonton and St. Albert petitioned the government to survey their lands. Only once the land was surveyed and divided into quarter sections could individuals begin the process of obtaining land, either through the application of scrip coupons or through the homestead system.

**FIGURE 9** Petition from Residents of Edmonton.

Source: Canada, 1886, *Sessional Papers*, Paper 45, Volume 19, Issue 12: 17-19.

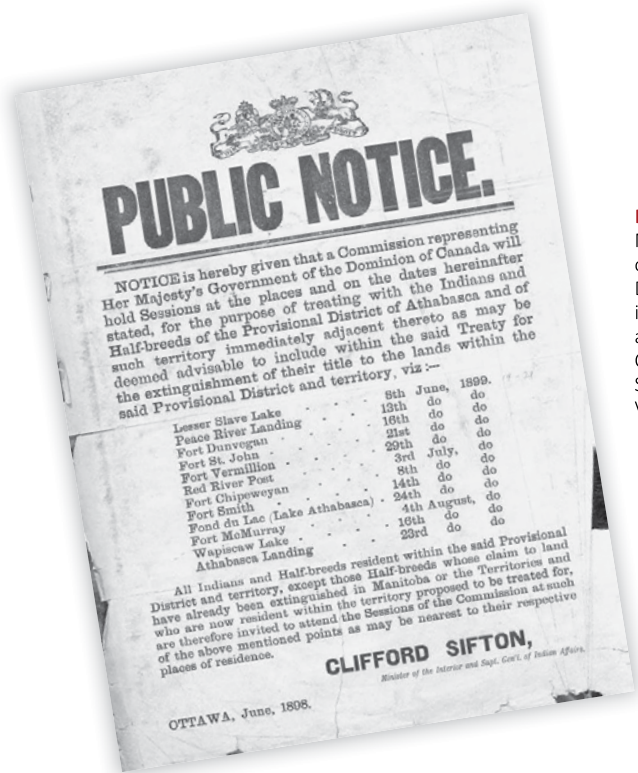


**APPLYING FOR SCRIP – A LONG PROCESS:** The process of applying for and receiving scrip, whether land scrip or money scrip, involved a series of documents. The process of applying for and receiving land scrip progressed in phases and each phase had multiple steps that required its own specific documents to be completed. Parents or guardians of minor children had to apply for scrip on behalf of their children. To turn a claim into a grant of land, a minimum of nine forms were required, and included the Application, a Witness Declaration, Certificate, Issue Order, Scrip Coupons, Receipt, Application for Location or Application to Purchase, and Letters Patent. Most of these documents are currently located at the Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa and some of them have been digitized on the Library and Archives Canada Website. Homestead records are housed at the Provincial Archives for the Province in which the homestead was located (e.g. Alberta). See **FIGURE 10** for a flowchart to illustrate how government officials viewed the processes.



**FIGURE 10** Land Scrip – The General Model, ca. 1906  
 Source: Frank Tough and Erin McGregor, *Metis Scrip: Treaty Ten Scrip Commission Commemorative Analysis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Edmonton: Metis Aboriginal Title Research Initiative – X, 2008: 4.

In order to address Métis claims in a given area, a scrip commissioner was appointed by an Order in Council. Working within the authority of the *Dominion Lands Act*, the specifics for who qualified for scrip would be set out by an Order in Council. Some of the scrip commissioners that took application for scrip in present day Alberta were Roger Goulet, Narcisse O. Coté, James A.J. McKenna, James Walker, Joseph A. Coté, Samuel McLeod, James A. Macrae and R.C. MacDonald. The federal government then provided notice to the places it intended to visit as well as the dates the commissioner would be taking applications for scrip.



**FIGURE 11** Public Notice to the Residents of the Provisional District of Athabasca indicating the dates and locales of the Scrip Commission, June 1898 Source: LAC RG15, Vol. 1485.

Once at the locale, the commission would set up at HBC posts or church missions to provide an opportunity to apply. To apply, an individual had to appear before the commissioner and if the commissioner thought the individual would qualify for scrip, an Application would be made in the presence of the commissioner. The Application contained the names of the applicant's parents as well as any children they had. A family member or other person who knew the individual who was applying for scrip would complete a witness declaration.

Once the Application was completed, the commissioner and his staff checked the name of the individual against their ledgers (along with other information such as place and date of birth) to make sure no previous claim for scrip had been made and granted. If the applicant qualified, a scrip certificate, issued and signed by the commissioner (SEE FIGURE 12), was given to the individual grantee and one or two copies were kept by the Department of the Interior. Both land and money scrip were administered in this way.



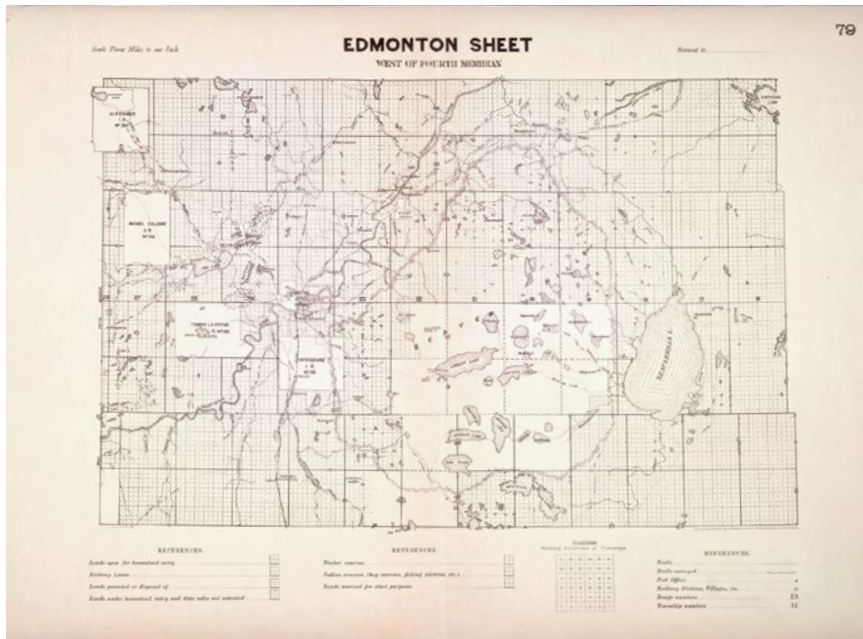
FIGURE 12 (above) Blank Scrip Certificate. Source: LAC RG 15, Vol. 534, File 155059.

FIGURE 13 (left) Receipt No. 12098 for Scrip Coupons A4069 and A5077 in favour of Narcisse L'Hirondelle confirming delivery to the Imperial Bank of Canada on January 19, 1901. Source: LAC RG15, Vol. 1418, File 600897.

This certificate did not immediately entitle the individual to land; it only confirmed that the individual was entitled to scrip. The certificate needed to be sent to the Department of the Interior to be exchanged for land scrip coupons, issued in the name of the individual. Once the scrip coupons were issued, the Department of the Interior would send the scrip coupons to the individual or a third party and whoever received the coupons would sign a receipt (SEE FIGURE 13). Most often the certificates were not in the possession of the grantees and scrip coupons were seldom delivered to grantees.<sup>6</sup> Scrip coupons could then be used at the Dominion Lands Office to select and acquire land.

6 Frank J. Tough and Kathleen Dimmer, "Great Frauds and Abuses": Institutional Innovation at the Colonial Frontier of Private Property: Case Studies of the Individualization of Maori, Indian and Métis Lands," *Settler Economies in World History*. Eds. C. Lloyd, J. Metzger and R. Sutch. Leiden: Brill, 2013. 205-49.

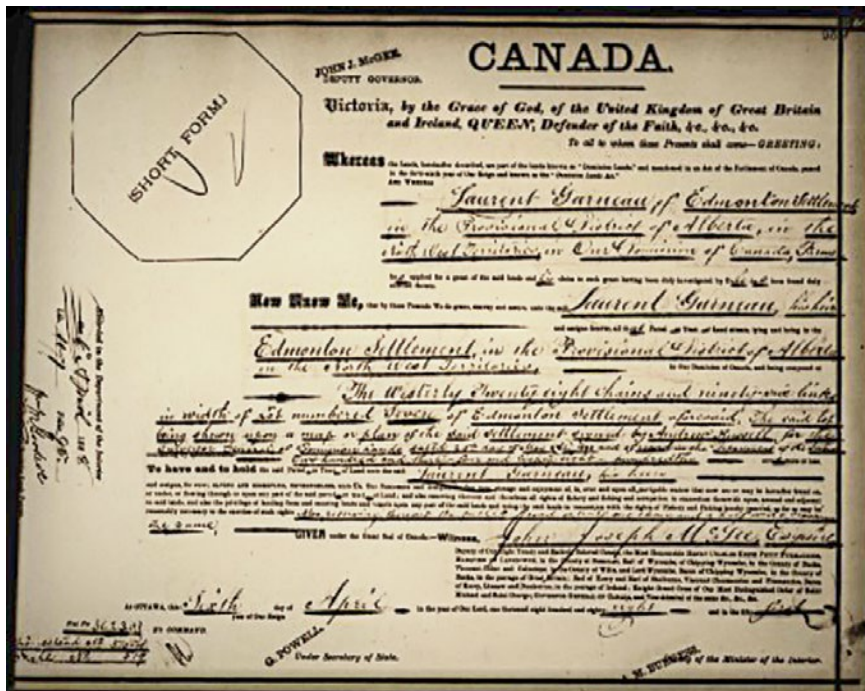
According to the rules of land scrip, the individual named on the scrip coupon had to appear in person in order to locate their scrip. This requirement was known as the Rule of Location. Additionally, the scrip coupon could not be sold or transferred to anyone else until the Métis grantee named on the land scrip coupon had located their scrip at the Dominion Lands Office. The Métis grantee also had to be an adult to sell or transfer the land once it had been located.



**FIGURE 14** Edmonton Sheet.  
Source: LAC RG15, Sectional Maps, plate 79.

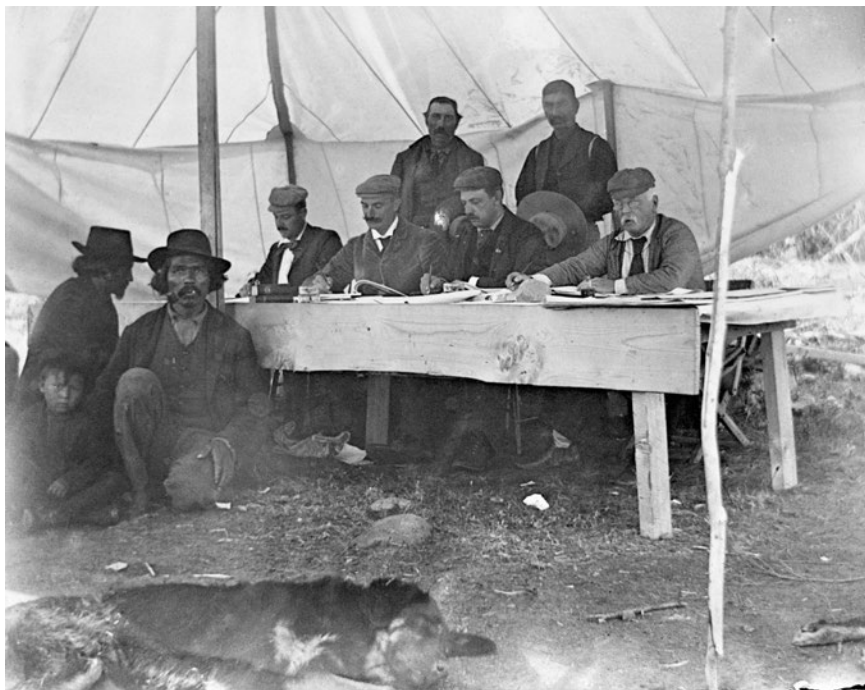
To comply with the Rule of Location, the Métis grantee had to travel to the Dominion Lands Office that administered the land they wanted to acquire. This process was called “locating” scrip and the grantee would have to complete an Application for Location identifying the lands to which he or she wanted to apply their 160 acres scrip coupon and/or their 80 acres scrip coupon. Locating was done by pointing to an available section on the map. Only lands open for homesteading could be chosen.

Once the grantee had located their scrip coupons at the Dominion Land Office as part of the legal land selection process, and the Application for Location had been completed, the application was sent to the Land Patents Branch in Ottawa. There, the application would be checked against other applications and if no issues or complications were noted, letters patent were sent to the patentee, confirming their right to obtain title to their lands.



**FIGURE 15** Letters Patent for River Lot 7 dated April 6, 1888, Edmonton Settlement issued to Laurent Garneau. Source: LAC RG15, File 644501, Liber 47, Folio 95.

**ELÉONORE HAMELIN'S SCRIP EXPERIENCE:** On March 2, 1900, the Privy Council passed an Order-in-Council that established a Scrip Commission to hear the claims of the Métis who resided in Alberta/Assiniboia<sup>7</sup> for those who had been born between July 15, 1870 and December 31, 1885. The commissioners at this time were James A.J. McKenna and James Walker and they took applications and, in most cases, issued scrip certificates.



**FIGURE 16** Scrip Commission meeting at Hudson's Bay Company post, Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta. 1899. Source: Glenbow Archives NA-949-18

Eléonore Hamelin appeared before scrip commissioners, James A.J. McKenna and James Walker, at Lac La Biche on September 21, 1900. The application was completed by one of the commissioners and Eléonore would have provided her answers to the questions asked in the application verbally. Eléonore stated that she was born on June 20, 1879 at Lac La Biche and that both of her parents were Half-breeds. A certificate of baptism also formed part of Eléonore's application. It was often church officials who provided proof of an applicant's identity, for example, through a birth certificate.

<sup>7</sup> At this time, the Provisional District of Alberta included areas of present day Alberta from the United States border in the south to areas immediately north of Lac La Biche, but did not extend as far east as the present day boundary of Alberta. The Provisional District of Assiniboia included present-day southern Saskatchewan.



2256.

*Examined OK.  
Both father  
and mother did work  
as Man St.B. in 1876.  
21/9/1900 - J.H.*

**Form A.**

**NORTH-WEST HALFBREED CLAIMS COMMISSION.**  
1900.

.....

**Before** JAMES ANDREW JOSEPH McKENNA, of the City of Ottawa, in the Province of Ontario, Esquire, and JAMES WALKER, of the City of Calgary, in the North-West Territories, Esquire, COMMISSIONERS, duly appointed and sitting as a Royal Commission at La Crosse in the North-West Territories, to investigate claims of Halfbreeds who were born in the Territories between the 15th July, 1870, and the 31st December, 1886, personally came and appeared Eléonore Hamelin

Claimant, who being duly sworn, deposes as follows :-

Question 1. What is your name?  
Answer Eléonore Hamelin

Question 2. Where do you reside?  
Answer Here

Question 3. Where were you born?  
Answer Here

Question 4. When were you born?  
Answer 20th June 1879

Question 5. What is your father's name?  
Answer Alexandre Hamelin

Question 6. What was the name of your mother before her marriage?  
Answer Angélique Houle

Question 7. Is your father a Halfbreed or an Indian?  
Answer Half

Question 8. Is your mother a Halfbreed or an Indian?  
Answer Half

Question 9. Have you ever received land or scrip in Manitoba or the North-West Territories in commutation of your Halfbreed rights?  
Answer NO

*See Alexandre Hamelin's claim for his deceased in Thomas Gauthier*

**FIGURE 17A** Page 1 of Land Scrip Application (Form A) of Eléonore Hamelin (September 21, 1900). Source: LAC RG15, Vol. 1350.

Question 10 Are you a member of any Indian Band?  
Answer No

This is certificate of my  
baptism (tabulat A)

1879 B 18 <sup>tabulat A</sup> Eléonore Hamelin (Alouane)  
Le vingt huit l'an mil huit cent soixante dix neuf  
nous prêtre soussigné avons baptisé Eléonore nei aijou  
de lui de l'ordonne mariage d'Alexandre Hamelin  
et d'Angelique Leoule. Parrain Louis Hamelin  
marraine Marie Marie Gittel qui signent avec nous  
Louis Hamelin + Collignon prêtre  
Fait au Lac la Piche le 8 Septm 1900  
Pour Copie Conforme [Signature]

And further deponent sayeth not.

Sworn before us at Lac la Piche  
Biche in the North- } Eléonore Hamelin  
West Territories on the 21<sup>st</sup>  
day of September A. D. 1900.

James Walton  
Commissioner.

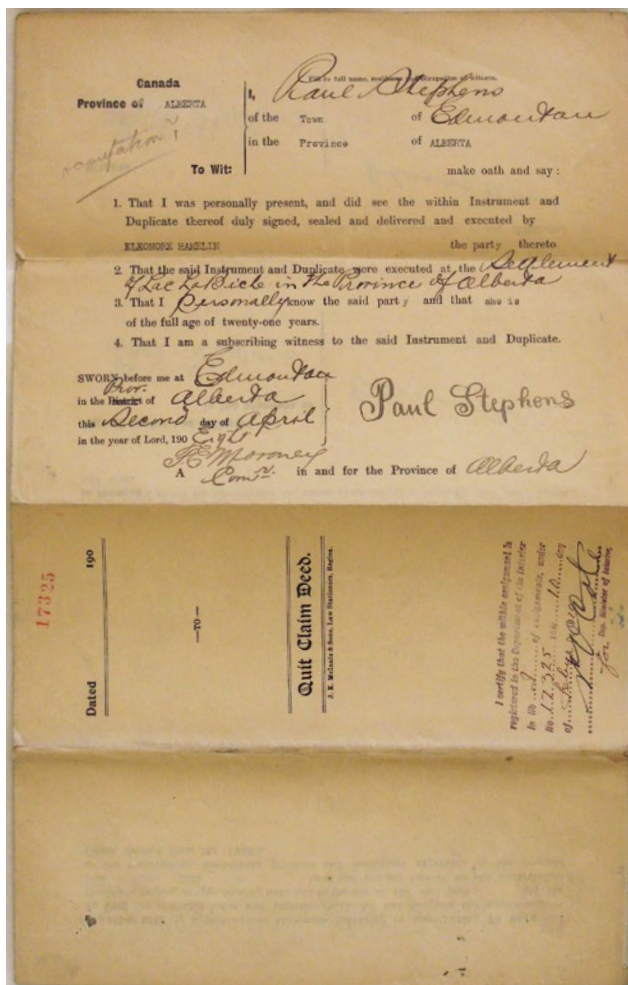
Form No. 151.

**FIGURE 17B** Page 2 of Land Scrip Application (Form A) of Eléonore Hamelin (September 21, 1900) with a copy of her Certificate of Baptism (inset) issued September 8, 1900. Source: LAC RG15, Vol. 1350.

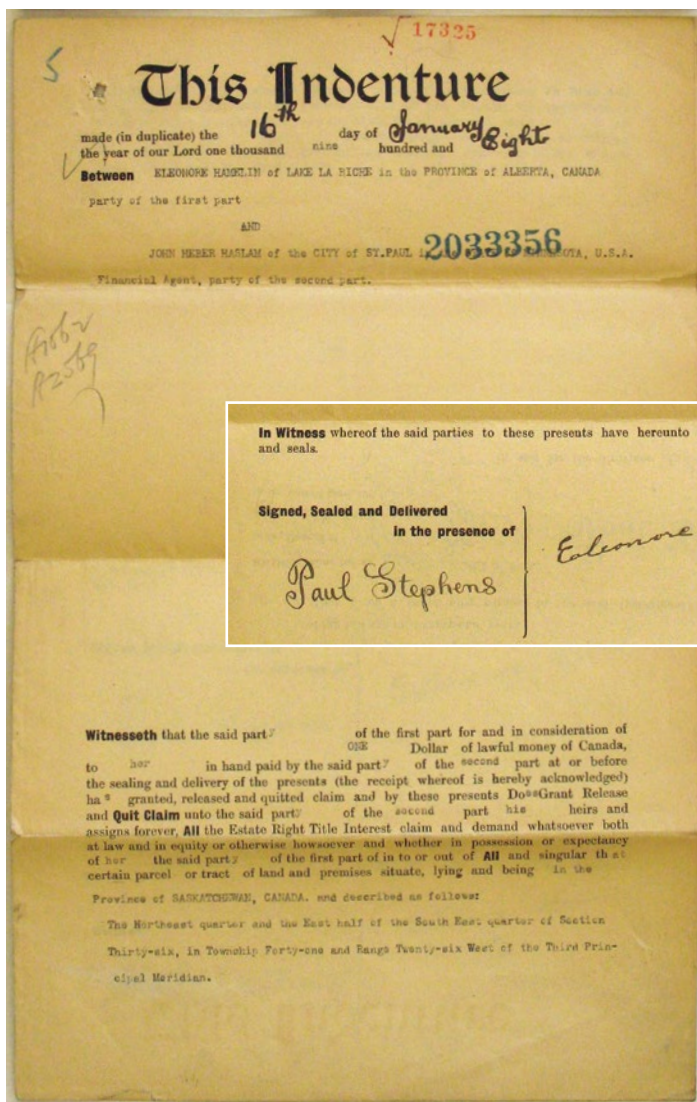
In most instances, individuals who completed applications for scrip endorsed the application by marking an “X” in place of their signature. This was not the case for Eléonore’s scrip application.

On November 27, 1900, scrip coupons A1064 and A2569 were issued in Eléonore’s name. The scrip coupons were issued in 1900, however, they were not used until 1908. Our research to date has not revealed where the scrip coupons had been delivered, if Eléonore signed the receipt for her scrip coupons, or if a third party signed on her behalf. We have not yet located these documents within the collection held at Library and Archives Canada.

In 1908, a Quit Claim was signed by Eléonore assigning the land she had purchased with her scrip to John Heber Haslam. A Quit Claim was used to transfer interest in a piece of property from one person to another.



**FIGURE 18** Quit Claim Deed of Eléonore Hamelin, executed at Lac La Biche and sworn at Edmonton on April 2, 1908. Source: LAC RG15, Vol. 1466.



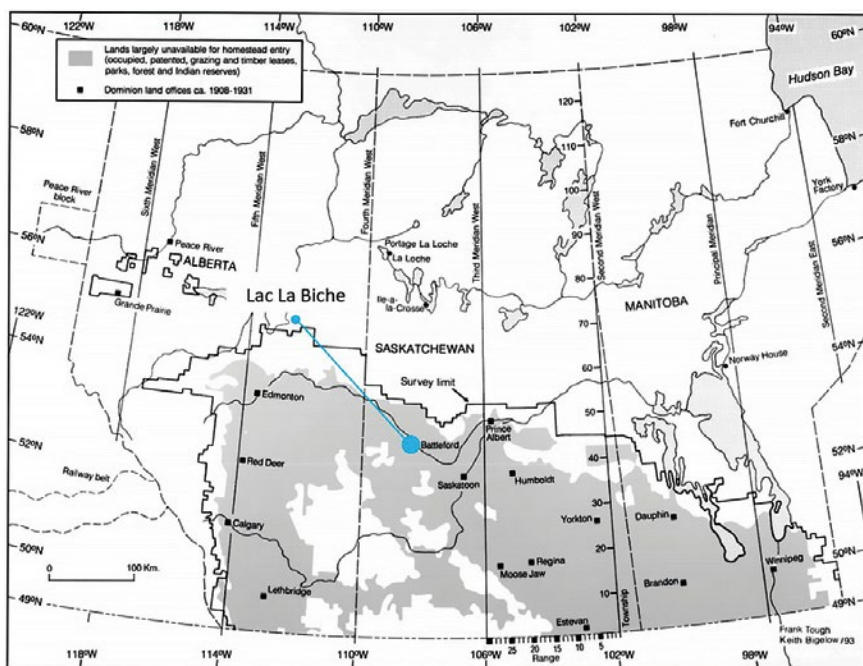
**FIGURE 19** Assignment from Eléonore Hamelin to John Heber Haslam dated January 16, 1908 for NE ¼ and E ½ of SE ¼ 36-24-26 W3rd.

Source: LAC RG15, Vol. 1466.

(Inset) Signature of Eléonore Hamelin on the Assignment to John Heber Haslam.

On January 16, 1908, Eléonore signed an agreement to transfer her interest in the land she had purchased with her scrip coupons to John Heber Haslam, a financial agent from St. Paul, Minnesota. Mr. Haslam purchased land scrip from two other individuals in Lac La Biche and his name appears on a number of other assignments from Métis grantees. Eléonore received \$1 for the land. The Quit Claim was signed by Eléonore at Lac La Biche on April 2, 1908.

The land purchased with Eléonore's scrip was located in Saskatchewan. According to the Rule of Location, Eléonore had to appear in person to locate her claim. This rule therefore meant Eléonore had to travel to the Dominion Land Office in Battleford, Saskatchewan. On current roadways, Eléonore had to travel approximately 850 kilometres from Lac La Biche to Battleford and back again.

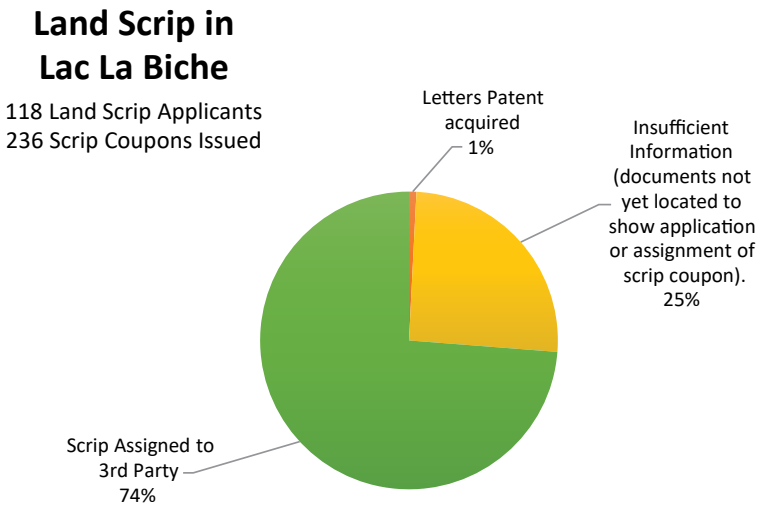


**FIGURE 20** Map showing Dominion Land Offices between 1906–1931 with the distance Eléonore would have travelled to locate her scrip.  
 Source: (map) Frank J. Tough and Keith Bigelow, 1993 in Frank J. Tough and Leah Dorion, “the claims of the Half-breeds ... have been finally closed”: A Study of Treaty Ten and Treaty Five Adhesion Scrip,” for The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. October, 1993. (data) MAP Laboratory, LAC RG15, Vol. 1350 and 1466.

Since Eléonore did not obtain letters patent to the land from the Lands Patent Branch of the Department of the Interior, it is not clear why Eléonore would have travelled to Battleford to locate her scrip.

Eléonore's experience with scrip was very similar to many other people in Lac La Biche. In 1900, 751 individual Scrip Applications were made. 633 of those Applications were for money scrip while 118 Applications were for land scrip. Of the 118 Applications for land scrip, 111 applications were successful and only 1 Applicant applied their scrip coupons to land and eventually received letters patent to their lands.

It is not known what percentage of Métis individuals applied for scrip, only that many land scrip coupons ended up in the hands of third parties.

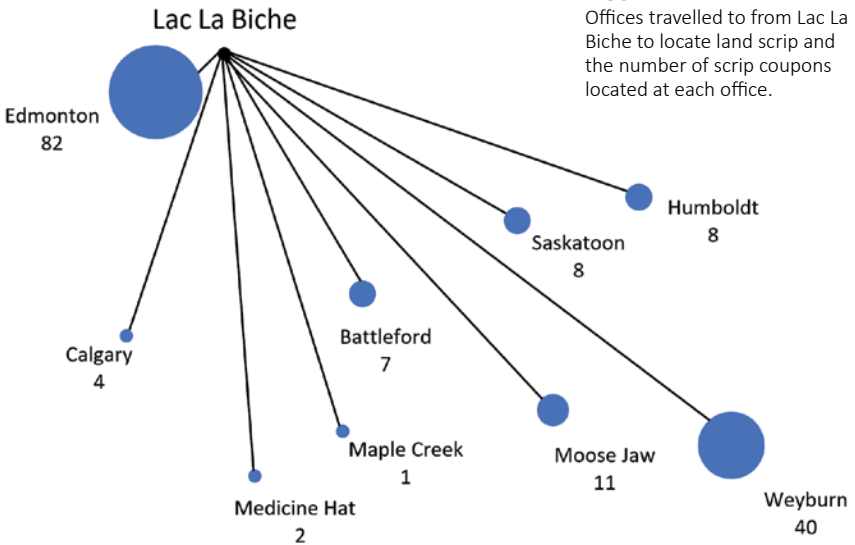


**FIGURE 21** Chart showing the ways in which Métis land scrip coupons were used by the Métis at Lac La Biche.

Source: LAC RG15, Volumes 1444 to 1468, MAP Laboratory.

Like Eléanore, many other individuals who received land scrip during the 1900 Scrip Commission assigned their land scrip to third parties. According to the Rule of Location, each individual would have had to travel to the Dominion Land Office responsible for administering the lands they wanted to purchase. It is not clear why so many individuals would have made such long journeys if they did not intend on purchasing the land themselves. And, in practice, few did. It is commonly accepted that in a vast number of cases land scrip assigned to third parties was not located by the Métis individuals to whom it had been issued—as required by law—but rather by fraudulent impersonators. This process was described in a legal memo by the Department of Justice in 1921:

*It appears that the scrip was handed to the half-breeds by the agent of the Indian Department and it was then purchased, for small sums of course, by speculators. However, the half-breed himself was required by the Department of the Interior to appear in person at the office of the land agent and select his land and hand over the scrip. In order to get over this difficulty, the speculator would employ the half-breed to impersonate the breed entitled to the scrip. This practice appears to have been very widely indulged in at one time.<sup>8</sup>*



**FIGURE 22** Dominion Land Offices travelled to from Lac La Biche to locate land scrip and the number of scrip coupons located at each office.

8 LAC RG13, Vol. 2170, file 1853, Legal Opinion (October 14, 1921) in Tough and Dimmer, “Great Frauds and Abuses”: 242.

It was very common for scrip lands to be assigned to third parties, not just in Lac La Biche. These third parties were both individuals and corporations and they obtained scrip to use as a tool for land speculation. One such individual was Richard Secord of Edmonton. Richard Secord, along with his business partner, John A. McDougall, had the scrip coupons of 37 individuals in Lac La Biche assigned to them. Those assignments amount to a total of 8,880 acres of land from just one community.



**FIGURE 23** Letters Patent for a portion of SW 1/4 18-51-14-W4th issued to John Alexander McDougall and Richard Secord on June 17, 1901. Source: LAC RG15, File 315770, Liber 151, Folio 165.

In 1921, a complaint of forgery and impersonation was made against Richard Secord. Flora Taylor, a Métis woman, testified that she had impersonated Elizabeth Hislop at the Dominion Lands Office in Edmonton. Secord had paid Flora 10 dollars and a grey shawl to say that she was Elizabeth in order to locate Elizabeth's entitlement so her land grant could be assigned to Secord. The Justice Department knew scrip speculators had been using forgeries to use scrip coupons to obtain lands to be sold to newcomers at a profit. Backlash to this case came swiftly from the prairie establishment. James Loughheed, then senator for Alberta, argued "there were a good many irregularities amounting to fraud and perjury in connection with the location of these lands,"<sup>9</sup> and the law should be changed to prevent prosecutions of fraud in relation to Half-breed scrip lands. Before Secord could be brought to trial, the *Criminal Code* was changed. A three-year time limit for the prosecution of Métis scrip frauds was added to the *Criminal Code*. Because the fraudulent activity had occurred a number of years in the past, the change effectively decriminalized scrip fraud.

9 Canada, Senate, Debates, 14th Parliament, 1st Session, 1922: 500.



**CREATION OF THE MÉTIS NATION OF ALBERTA:** In Alberta, a political outrage followed the unelected Canadian Senate's sudden amendment to the *Criminal Code* as it was seemingly designed to change the law to protect a well-to-do Edmonton land developer at the expense of Métis grantees. A federal election occurred in the fall of 1921 and scrip fraud was a campaign issue. The conservatives failed to elect a single Member of Parliament.

The Métis in Alberta had petitioned the government to act on their behalf in the past. In the 1920s, the Métis began to organize themselves politically and began creating alliances with those who supported their position. In 1928, the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA), as it was then called, was established to fight for the rights of the Métis in Alberta. In the 1930s, the MAA was successful in pressuring the provincial government (under the leadership of the United Farmers of Alberta) to create a commission (the Ewing Commission) to look into the social and economic issues of the Métis, including land rights.

In 1938, the pressure put on the provincial government by the MAA was successful. The *Metis Population Betterment Act* was introduced, setting aside a large amount of land for the Métis. Though this was an important victory for the Métis, it did not resolve the legacy left to the Métis by the scrip system and the land speculation and fraud it encouraged. Rather, this was a social welfare initiative undertaken by the provincial government, who had had no direct hand in Métis scrip.



**FIGURE 24** Founding Members of the Métis Association of Alberta. March 1935. Front row, L-R: Malcolm Frederick Norris, Joseph Francis Dion, James Patrick Brady. Back row, L-R: Peter Cecil Tomkins, Felix Callihoo. Source: Glenbow Archives (PA-2218-109).

**NEW FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT AND SCRIP:** The injustice of the Métis scrip system has not gone unnoticed. The Supreme Court of Canada has said that “the history of scrip speculation and devaluation is a sorry chapter in our nation’s history.”<sup>10</sup> But, for generations, the Métis had nowhere to turn for redress. For Métis in Alberta, that changed on November 16, 2017, when the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Government of Canada signed the historic *Framework Agreement for Advancing Reconciliation*. The framework agreement sets out a formal negotiation process and defined subjects to be negotiated. One of the three priority areas of the agreement is exploring ways of settling the outstanding claims of the Métis Nation within Alberta, including claims relating to Métis scrip issued pursuant to the *Dominion Lands Act*. While the framework agreement does not determine the outcome of the negotiations, the agreement acknowledges the need to address the injustices suffered by the Métis Nation as a result of the scrip system and declares a shared goal to develop a solution promoting reconciliation between the Métis Nation of Alberta and Canada.



**FIGURE 25** MNA President, Audrey Poitras, and Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Carolyn Bennett, signing the MNA-Canada Framework Agreement for Advancing Reconciliation. Image courtesy of the Métis Nation of Alberta. For more information about the current status of the reconciliation work, please visit [albertametis.com](http://albertametis.com).

<sup>10</sup> *R. v. Blais*, 2003 SCC 44, at para 34.

## GLOSSARY

**Applicant:** An individual whose name appears on an application form for either Manitoba Métis Affidavits or Northwest Scrip Applications.

**Certificate:** a document certified by the scrip commissioner that a claimant was entitled to scrip; certificates were filled out in duplicate or triplicate, one copy being given to the claimant and the other copy or copies forwarded to the Department of the Interior.

**Grantee:** a Métis person whose claim to scrip has been recognized and approved by a scrip commissioner or the Department of the Interior.

**Half-breed scrip:** a document or coupon that entitled the holder to a specified amount of dominion lands specifically issued to a Métis person with the intent of “extinguishing” his or her Aboriginal title; Half-breed scrip was issued either as money scrip or land scrip; money scrip was issued in dollar amounts and entitled the bearer to use the coupon toward the purchase of available homestead lands; land scrip was issued in acre amounts and entitled the named individual to use the coupon to locate or purchase available homestead lands.

**Homestead lands:** lands available for selection by a homesteader.

**Letters patent:** issued by the federal government to confirm rights to a particular portion of land; sometimes referred to as a “deed” or “title deed.”

**Rule of location:** the requirement that no person other than the scrip grantee could use the land scrip coupon to acquire or locate land.

**Rupertsland:** A large territory consisted of all lands drained by rivers flowing into the Hudson Bay, or the Hudson Bay drainage basin. This territory was acquired by the Hudson’s Bay Company Charter of 1670 as a grant from Prince Rupert. Also known as Rupert’s Land and a major part of the total Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) territory. After lengthy negotiations, this large territory was formally transferred to the Dominion of Canada on July 15, 1870.

**Witness declaration:** a form filled out and signed by a person who knew the claimant and could verify the information given by the applicant.

## ARCHIVAL SOURCES

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