

THE FORT MCKAY MÉTIS NATION: A COMMUNITY HISTORY

Peter Fortna

ISBN 978-1-77385-593-6

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at <a href="https://www.uccess.org/nc-books-nc-bo

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY:

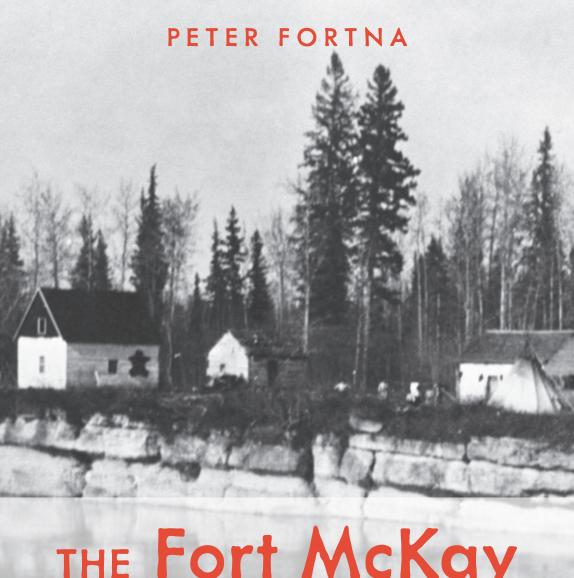
- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY NOT:

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work:
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work:
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work:
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.



Acknowledgement: We acknowledge the wording around open access used by Australian publisher, **re.press**, and thank them for giving us permission to adapt their wording to our policy http://www.re-press.org



THE Fort McKay Métis Nation

A COMMUNITY HISTORY

THE FORT McKAY MÉTIS NATION



Fort McKay, Circa 1920. Karl Clark, Provincial Archives of Alberta, A3517b, PR1968.0015.



THE Fort McKay Métis Nation

A COMMUNITY HISTORY

PETER FORTNA

© 2025 Peter Fortna

LCR Publishing Services An imprint of University of Calgary Press 2500 University Drive NW Calgary, Alberta Canada T2N 1N4 press.ucalgary.ca

All rights reserved.

This book is available in an Open Access digital format published under a CC-BY-NCND 4.0 Creative Commons license. The publisher should be contacted for any commercial use which falls outside the terms of that license.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION

Title: The Fort McKay Métis Nation: a community history / Peter Fortna.

Names: Fortna, Peter, author

Description: Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20240528263 | Canadiana (ebook) 20240528301 | ISBN 9781773855912 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781773855929 (softcover) | ISBN 9781773855943 (PDF) | ISBN 9781773855950 (EPUB) | ISBN 9781773855936 (Open Access PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: Métis—Fort McKay First Nation—History. | LCSH: Métis—Alberta, Northern—History. | LCSH: Fort McKay First Nation—History.

Classification: LCC E78.A34 F67 2025 | DDC 971.23/2—dc23

The University of Calgary Press acknowledges the support of the Government of Alberta through the Alberta Media Fund for our publications. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada. We acknowledge the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts for our publishing program.







Copyediting by Kaitlin Littlechild

Cover image: "Fort MacKay, Alberta.", [ca. 1917-1919], (CU181632) by Unknown. Courtesy of Glenbow Library and Archives Collection, Libraries and Cultural Resources Digital Collections, University of Calgary.

Cover design, page design, and typesetting by Melina Cusano

Contents

Preface	VII
Acknowledgements	IX
Introduction: Steps toward a Fort McKay Métis Community History	1
Early History of the Fort McKay Métis: Origins to 1899	21
2 Fort McKay, Treaty, Scrip and the Immediate Aftermath: 1899 to 1920	35
The Bush Economy and the Registered Trapline System	49
4 Land Tenure in Fort McKay: "Split Our Very Identity into Two"	65
A Community Turned "Upside Down": Fort McKay's Response to Extractivism	107
Epilogue: From Community to Nation — The Evolving Relationship between the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Fort McKay Métis Nation	135
Appendix: The Fort McKay Métis Nation Position Paper on Consultation and Self-Government	149
Notes	159
Bibliography	205
Index	219

Preface

We are happy to share our history with our people and the broader public. This book documents our community's story and shows how we came to grow into the Fort McKay Métis Nation, rooted in kinship and place.

We would specifically like to thank all the community members who lived this history and fought to ensure our community is still here today against all odds. That is our collective legacy, and it is on that firm footing our Nation is built for today and for the future.

Finally, we would like to dedicate this book to both our Elders and our children. It is our hope that sharing and knowing this history will help to ensure the continued success of our Métis Nation.

Marsi Cho, Kinanâskomitin, Thank you

Fort McKay Métis Nation Council

Loretta Waquan Felix Faichney Brenda Paquette Janice Richards Lana Huppie

Acknowledgements

A heartfelt thank you to all the Fort McKay Métis members for sharing your knowledge, memories, and insights over the years. Hopefully, by documenting your perspectives on Fort McKay's history, identity, culture, and land use, we can help sustain the Métis way of life for future generations.

Thank you to Fort McKay community members for sharing so graciously. Thank you to the Fort McKay Métis Nation staff and Fort McKay Métis Nation councillors for their continued support.

Thank you to Laura Hanowski for providing detailed information about the Fort McKay Métis community's genealogy. Also, thank you to Terry Garvin, Rod Hyde, Barb Faichney, and Hereward Longley for providing access to their collections of archival photographs and other material about the community. Also, thank you to Emily Boak and Dawn Piche Wambold, who provided research assistance and to Michael Robson, who, with Emily, developed the manuscript's maps. Additional thanks to Heather Devine, Neil Reddekopp, and Patricia McCormack for reviewing and providing comments on earlier drafts of this manuscript.

Finally, thank you to the many Fort McKay Métis Nation staff and community members who helped make this project a reality. They include Barb Faichney, Rachel Richards, Rod Hyde, Dayle Hyde, Lina Gallup, Cort Gallup, Holly Fortier, Billie Fortier, Ron Quintal, Lauretta Waquan, Felix Faichney, Janice Richards, Glen Faichney, Eddison Lee Johnston, Daniel Stuckless, Jenifer Vardy, Maggie Butts, Contessa Short, and many, many others.

I want to thank my family (Gretchen, Patrick, and Jacob) for their continued patience and support as this project took form. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I want to dedicate the work to the people of Fort McKay, whose histories have changed me in more ways than they will ever know.

Funding for this project has come from the Fort McKay Métis Nation and the Alberta government.

While many have helped with this book, any errors are solely my responsibility and likely a direct result of me not spending enough time in the bush visiting with Elders sharing stories about what really happened.