

# FIRST AND FOREVER



## MÉTIS INFINITY SYMBOL

**A**n infinity symbol prominently appears in the middle of a blue or red field in the Métis flag. The infinity symbol is a “lazy” horizontal figure eight. The symbol represents the formation of a new and distinct Indigenous People, the Métis. Alexander Greenfield Macdonell (a partner of the fur-trading North West Company) called the Métis a “new nation.” He gave the first Métis flag with the infinity symbol on it to the great Métis leader Cuthbert Grant in 1815.

The infinity symbol on the flag was the ideal choice for the Métis. One loop of the symbol represents their descent from Indigenous Peoples, while the other loop represents their descent from Europeans. These two loops are joined together in the center of the Métis flag. They symbolize the union forever of the offspring of these two great cultures into the unique Métis Peoples, with their own fascinating history, heritage and culture.

*-By George and Terry Goulet, active members of the Métis Nation who advocate for the Métis through their work as writers, researchers, historians and speakers. They live in Sechelt, British Columbia.*



George and Terry Goulet, Métis Nation of Alberta

# MI'KMAW EIGHT-POINTED STAR

The Mi'kmaq Eight-Pointed Star is an adaptation of the original seven-pointed star, a historical emblem representing the seven districts of Mi'kma'ki, the homeland of the Mi'kmaq. The eighth point was added to represent the British Crown after the Covenant Chain of Treaties were made between the Mi'kmaq and Britain during

the 1700s. In its traditional form, this symbol has been used for centuries, and today many Mi'kmaq organizations continue to use it in a more modern way, often seen in logo designs.

*-By Gerald Gloade, a Mi'kmaq artist and cultural educator from Millbrook First Nation in Nova Scotia.*

Gerald Gloade, Melissa Peter Paul





## INUIT KAJAK (KAYAK)

**A** *Kajak* was made for a person to travel through water under their own power using a double-bladed paddle. (In other parts of the Far North the word we know as *kayak* would be spelled *qajaq*.) Inuit made *Kajait* (kayaks) for countless generations. This travel brought an Inuk to hunt in the oceans and even lakes for essential foods for survival. Before building, the materials must be collected. The Inuit *Kajak* is made of wood, sometimes with bone parts. The wood rings strain to take shape, each often wanting to take its own path. The wooden sections are precisely cut to fit onto or into each other and then bound securely to one another, almost like a human frame. The *Kajak* has many wooden parts that must all be bent and curved the right way. Too much pressure and they will snap. Too little and they will not fit properly. The cover was often sealskin though other animals like caribou can be used. Today, some Inuit — mainly in Greenland — still make *Kajait*. The *Kajak*'s engineered, efficient shape explains its worldwide popularity today. Inuit were known to travel up to 100 kilometres a day by *Kajak* and at times even farther. These distances travelled by *Kajak* are no longer common, but some Inuit can still do them. Often it was much closer distances to camp for hunting. They hunted animals such as seals, caribou, sea birds, walrus, small whales and bears, as well as fishing and collecting eggs. For me the *Kajak* is a symbol about equalization and freedom. For Inuit it was an important tool that symbolized food and water transportation.

*-By Noah Nochasak, who is originally from Nain and lives in Nain, Nunatsiavut. He has Kajakkut (travelled by Kajak) since 2010.*

Library and Archives Canada, Noah Nochasak



## CREE BEADED HOODS

**B**eads are a sign of prosperity. In place of European money during the fur trade, beads and sewing materials became trade items. Indigenous society placed a lot of value on beads; they were things we could touch and were tied to our identities as physical and spiritual beings. You could distinguish a lot about a person's cultural identity, status and role in society through beadwork. Beaded hoods demonstrate this relationship with beads and how this ties into our cultural values. The hood had a tassel at the top with three panels that would cover the wearer's hair. The design, which emphasized symmetry and details, reflected Cree understanding of the universe: earth, sky and water. Married women wore beaded hoods during ceremonies and significant events.

*-By Leticia Spence, a graphic designer and illustrator from Pimicikamak Cree Nation and Opaskwayak Cree Nation, who lives in Treaty 1 territory (Winnipeg).*

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