



Artwork by George Gignas

P is for Pemmican

Pemmican is made of dried buffalo meat, berries, and bone marrow.
It was a nutritious food which did not spoil on long journeys.

P si poor li pemmican

Li tooroo ooshchikatew avik la vyaand di bufloo, lii grenn, pi la mwel.
Sitay li miyeur maanzhii pi namooya shaymak kii maayihtin aan graan waayaazh.



P is for Pemmican

Pemmican is made of dried buffalo meat, berries, and bone marrow. It was a nutritious food which did not spoil on long journeys.

P si poor li pemmican

Li tooroo ooshchikatew avik la vyaand di bufloo, lii grenn, pi la mwel. Sitay li miyeur maanzhii pi namooya shaymak kii maayihtin aan graan waayaazh.

Plains **First Nations** made pemmican since before recorded time. Pemmican was eaten by all **Aboriginal nations** living in North America's interior. The **Michif** word for pemmican is "li tooroo." This high-energy food was nourishing, light weight, and could be preserved for years. It was especially useful for those who were away for month-long **bison** hunts, or while on **Red River** Cart freighting expeditions. Pemmican could be eaten dry, or it could be made into a stew if flour, wild roots and vegetables were on hand. Métis women made pemmican by mixing pounded, shaved, or powdered bison meat with hot fat (bone marrow) and dried berries. The mixture was then dried over an open flame. It was finally packed tightly in bags made of bison leather. Without pemmican most Métis and non-Aboriginal settlers would not have been able to survive Western Canada's harsh winters and short summers. In the 1800s, this climate made farming, harvesting, and storing vegetables and fruits very difficult.

Pemmican was also very important to the development of Métis **identity**. From the 1790s until 1821, many Métis sold pemmican to the two fur trade companies: the **North West Company** (NWC) and the **Hudson's Bay Company** (HBC). The Métis were upset when HBC Governor Miles Macdonnell issued the "Pemmican Proclamations" in 1814. The proclamations outlawed the sale of pemmican to the NWC. This action eventually led to the **Battle of Seven Oaks** on June 19, 1816, where the Métis defeated HBC employees, soldiers, and **Selkirk Settlers**. This battle resulted in the birth of the **Métis Nation**.

Other Resources:

Barkwell, Lawrence J., L. Dorion, and A. Hourie. *Metis Legacy II: Michif Culture, Heritage, and Folkways*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2007.

Pelletier, Joanne. *Métis Historical Booklet Series: The Bison Hunt and The Skirmish at Seven Oaks*. Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1985. (Available online at www.metismuseum.ca).

Racette, Calvin. *The Flags of the Métis*. Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1987. (Available online at www.metismuseum.ca).

The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture (www.metismuseum.ca).

