

Teacher's Guide to
**Gabriel Dumont:
Metis Legend**



Teacher's Guide to Gabriel Dumont: Metis Legend

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Contents of *Gabriel Dumont: Metis Legend Kit*:

- filmstrip
- audiotape
- teacher's guide

Concepts

- Values (of the Metis in the 19th century)
- Culture (of the Metis in the 19th century)
- Cultural Change
- Leadership

Grade Level

- Grades 3 to 5

Objectives

The objectives of *Gabriel Dumont: Metis Legend* are:

- to present the highlights of Gabriel Dumont's life
- to illustrate aspects of nineteenth century Metis culture
- to show the changes in the Metis' culture and lifestyle during the nineteenth century
- to correlate the training Gabriel received as a child and young man with his role as an adult.

Background Information

The word Metis means mixture. The Metis were the children of women from the Indian nations and men who had come to Canada from Europe to work in the fur trade. The Metis learned the ways of both their fathers and their mothers. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, they had developed a culture that was different from either the Indian cultures or the European cultures. They developed their own political system and their own language (a mixture of Cree, French and English). Their clothing integrated Indian and European styles. Their favourite dance, the Red River Jig, contained elements of Scottish reels and square dances which were combined with traditional dances of the Indian nations. It was into this culture that Gabriel Dumont was born in 1837.

At the time of Gabriel's birth, many of the Metis made their homes in the Red River Settlement where they had small farms along the rivers. Twice a year, in spring and fall, they loaded their families and supplies onto their Red River carts and set off across the prairie to hunt the buffalo. On these excursions the Metis travelled in groups, sometimes numbering 1000 men, women and children.

All aspects of the hunt were well organized. The hunters were responsible for finding and killing the buffalo. The women and children dried the meat, made pemmican and cured the hides. Each hunt was run by one leader and 10 captains. While on the hunt, everyone was subject to the laws of the hunt, which were strictly enforced by the leader and captains.

Laws of the Prairie for Buffalo Hunting

1. *No buffalo to be run on the Sabbath-day.*
 2. *No party to [break] off, lag behind, or go before, without permission.*
 3. *No person or party to run buffalo before the general order.*
 4. *Every captain with his men, in turn, to patrol the camp, and keep guard.*
 5. *For the first trespass against these laws, the offender to have his saddle and bridle cut up.*
 6. *For the second offence, the coat to be taken off the offender's back, and be cut up.*
 7. *For the third offence, the offender to be flogged.*
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8. Any person convicted of theft, even to the value of a sinew, to be brought to the middle of the camp, and the crier to call out his or her name three times, adding the word "Thief", at each time.¹

Not only did the buffalo hunt supply the Metis with meat and clothing, it provided them with a source of income since much of the pemmican made was sold to the fur trading companies. Besides buffalo hunting, the Metis engaged in subsistence-level farming and, during the winter, they trapped and traded furs.

By the mid-1860's, this way of life was beginning to change. The great herds of buffalo were becoming fewer and more and more immigrants were moving into the Red River Settlement. Some of the Metis, including Gabriel and his wife, Madeleine, moved to the Saskatchewan District where they were still able to pursue their traditional way of life. However, by the early 1870's the buffalo were so scarce that, even in the Saskatchewan District, the Metis were forced to turn to subsistence farming as their main way of making a living.

In 1871 they converted their winter camp into a permanent community (St. Laurent) and, in 1873, formed a government and established laws. These laws, which incorporated many of the Laws of the Prairie, were designed to meet the needs of the community. Two years later, the Metis arrested a party of hunters for running the buffalo before the general order had been given. A Hudson's Bay Company factor, Lawrence Clarke, informed the Lieutenant Governor that Dumont had taken the law into his own hands and that a police force was needed at once to prevent lawlessness and eventual insurrection.

The arrival of the North West Mounted Police and the trial of Gabriel Dumont marked the beginning of British law on the prairies. It also marked the end of Metis law and removed all restrictions on the wanton slaughter of the remaining buffalo.

With the buffalo almost non-existent, the Metis' farms became their livelihood. However, they did not hold title to their lands. From 1873 to 1885, the Metis of the North West sent petitions to Ottawa requesting title to the lands on which they lived. Although some of the petitions were acknowledged by the federal government, nothing was done to ensure that the Metis received entitlements.

¹ Howard, Joseph, *Strange Empire*, Toronto: James Lewis & Samuel, 1974.

Suggested methods

This filmstrip/audiotape kit is best suited to group instruction. It is recommended that the teacher:

1. Preview both the program and the teacher's guide so as to become familiar with the concepts and content.
2. Briefly explain to the class that, in his lifetime, Dumont travelled back and forth between what are now the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Explain also that the government for this area was situated two to three thousand kilometres away in Ottawa. (See map, page 5).
3. Review the vocabulary words (page 7).
4. Ask the students to keep in mind the following questions as they view the program.
 - In what ways are Gabriel's boyhood experiences different from those of a boy in present-day society?
 - What items shown in the filmstrip have been replaced by other items in our society? What have they been replaced by?
5. Present the program.
6. After the presentation, choose some of the questions and activities on pages 10 to 14. These are intended to reinforce the content and can be used either individually or in groups.

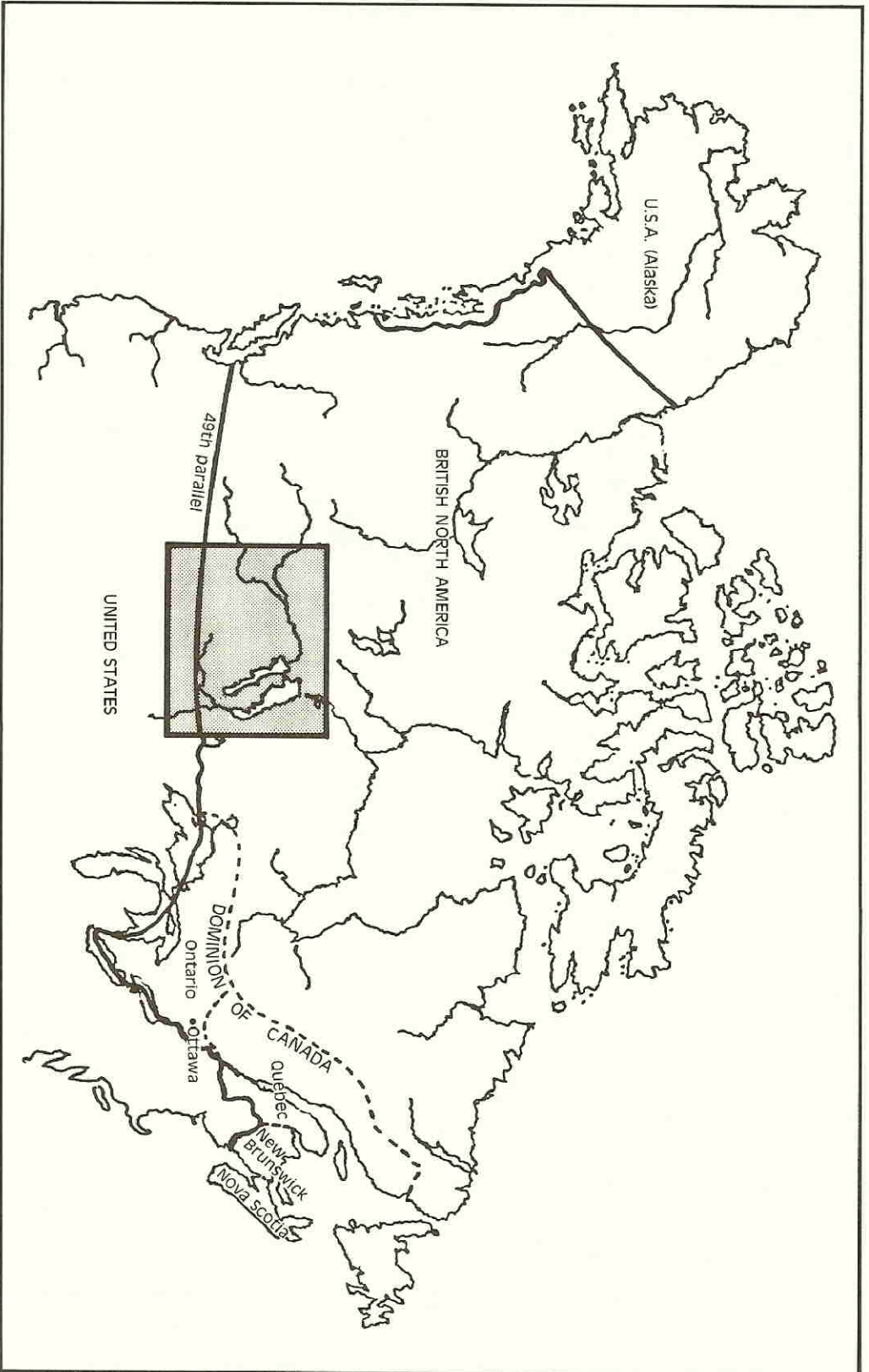
Content Summary

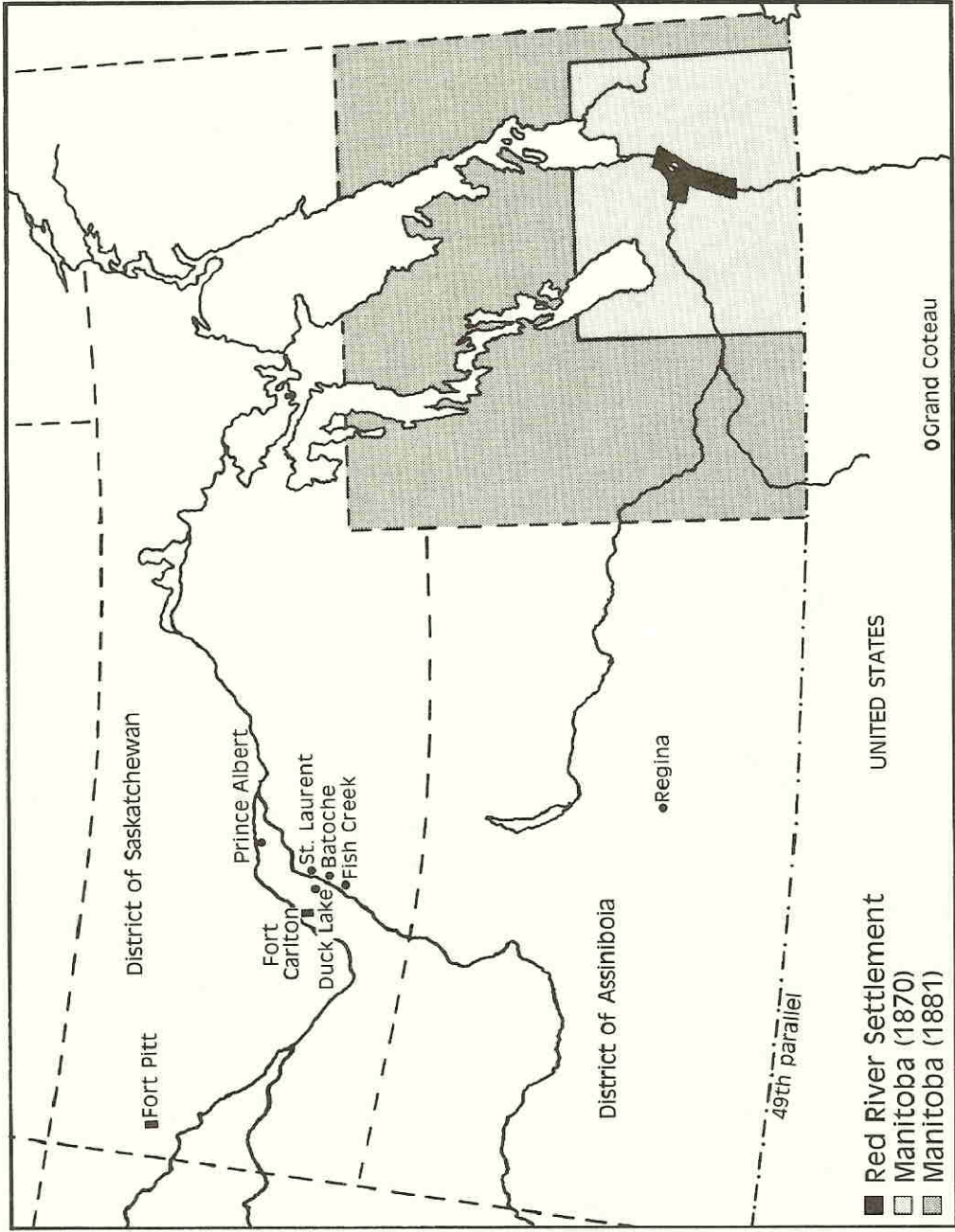
This filmstrip is a biography of the life of Gabriel Dumont, buffalo hunter, diplomat, humanitarian and Metis leader. In it we see the artist's impressions of Gabriel as a baby, boy, young man and adult.

In many respects Gabriel Dumont's life is a portrayal of Metis culture and values. The foundations of Metis society were co-operation and concern for others. Both of these Dumont demonstrated time and again throughout his life.

The nineteenth century proved to be the richest in history for the Metis. During this period Dumont and many others assumed leadership roles. However, Dumont's involvement in the establishment of St. Laurent and in the battles of the 1885 Resistance have made him one of the best known leaders of the Metis people.

Canada and the North West Territories in 1870. (Shaded area is enlarged on page 6.)





Map showing location of communities and areas mentioned in the script.

Vocabulary

The following words are listed in the order in which they appear in the script.

diplomat: a person who is skilled at dealing with people

humanitarian: a person who is concerned about the well-being of others

Metis: a person who has both Indian and European ancestors

Red River cart: a wood cart, with large, wood wheels, which was drawn by an ox or a horse and used for travel on the prairie

pemmican: a nutritious mixture of dried buffalo meat, fat and berries

Le Petit: French for "Little One", the name which Gabriel gave to his rifle

trading post: a building where items such as blankets, pots and traps were traded for furs

negotiate: to discuss problems in an attempt to find a solution

petition: a written request from one or more people

military: relating to defense of homeland

treason: disloyalty to one's country

exile: long absence from one's country

amnesty: a pardon for a wrongdoing

Script

1. The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, Inc. presents
2. *Gabriel Dumont: Metis Legend*
3. This is the story of Gabriel Dumont: buffalo hunter, diplomat, humanitarian and Metis leader.
4. Gabriel was born on a farm near the Red River Settlement in December 1837. As a small baby, Gabriel would have been carried on his mother's back on a cradleboard which was probably made by his father.
5. In 1840, the Dumonts and many other Metis families travelled west by Red River cart. When crossing a river, the wheels were removed and the carts used as rafts.
6. On the way, they took part in one of the largest buffalo hunts ever held by the Red River Metis. Buffalo meat supplied food and pemmican for trading...buffalo hides were used for coats and blankets.
7. The Dumonts settled near Fort Pitt. Here Gabriel's father bought supplies from the trading post and traded with the Indians.

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8. Like other Metis and Indian children, Gabriel tracked and studied the animals to learn their ways. In time, he became a successful hunter.
 9. His skill at imitating animal calls was so great that one day he walked into camp completely covered with birds which he had called to him.
 10. Gabriel's playmates were the Indian and Metis children of nearby families. By the age of 10, as well as his native French, he could speak six Indian languages.
 11. In 1848, the Dumonts returned to the Red River area. On this trip, Gabriel heard strange noises one night and told the leader that the camp was about to be attacked.
 12. The fires were put out and defenses set up.
 13. The strange noises were found to be a herd of buffalo passing by. After some laughter and teasing, the fires were rebuilt.
 14. But, for his quick thinking and bravery, Gabriel's uncle gave him a rifle which he named "Le Petit", which means Little One.
 15. When he was 13, Gabriel took part in a buffalo hunt in the United States. At the Grand Coteau, a small group of Metis were surrounded by many Dakota.²
 16. The Metis quickly pulled their carts into a circle and dug trenches. They defended their camp and drove off the Dakota.
 17. Gabriel continued to hunt and trap and to trade furs. He became known across the prairie for his skills. Later, he became the leader of the buffalo hunt.
 18. In 1858, Gabriel married Madeleine Wilkie, a school teacher. They continued to go on buffalo hunts and trapped and traded furs. Madeleine took the furs and pemmican to the Red River Settlement and sold them to the Hudson's Bay Company while Gabriel continued to hunt.
 19. In 1862, Gabriel helped negotiate peace among the Metis, Cree and Dakota, which put an end to years of fighting.
 20. Although known for his bravery and hunting skills, Gabriel was also thoughtful of others. He made sure that those who needed food received it and that everyone had enough wood for the winter.
 21. Gabriel and Madeleine had no children of their own, so they shared their love and knowledge with many children in the community.
 22. In the mid-1860's, Gabriel, Madeleine and many other Metis families returned to the Saskatchewan District and settled near Fort Carlton, where Gabriel again met friends from his

² Note that in the script, the term Dakota has been used rather than Sioux, since Dakota is the name by which these people prefer to be known.

childhood: Chief Big Bear and Gentleman Joe McKay, a Hudson's Bay Company scout.

23. In 1870, the Red River Metis were in danger of losing their lands and homes to settlers who were moving into the area. Their leader, Louis Riel, was trying to find a solution to this problem.
 24. When Gabriel heard this, he was quick to offer his help. However, his help was not needed because a solution had been reached, which resulted in the creation of the province of Manitoba.
 25. Meanwhile, in the Saskatchewan District, farming began to replace buffalo hunting. The Metis decided to form a permanent community, which they called St. Laurent. In 1873, the people of St. Laurent met to form a government and make laws. They elected Gabriel as their president.
 26. As president, in 1875, Gabriel arrested a group of hunters who violated the laws of the hunt, thereby threatening the well-being of the community. For this, Gabriel was accused of taking the law into his own hands. The North West Mounted Police came to St. Laurent and Gabriel was arrested, tried and given a fine.
 27. With the buffalo herds nearly all gone, farming became the main way of making a living. Although the Metis lived on the land, they did not own it, so they sent petitions to the government in Ottawa, asking for ownership of their lands.
 28. In 1880, Gabriel started his own business. He operated a ferry across the Saskatchewan River at a spot which became known as Gabriel's Crossing.
 29. Time went by and the petitions were not answered. In 1884, Gabriel and some of the Metis went to see Louis Riel in Montana. They asked Riel to join them in their struggle for land rights.
 30. Riel returned with them and helped to organize the people. They asked Lawrence Clarke, who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company and was a long-time friend of the Metis, to speak to the Canadian Government in Ottawa on behalf of the Metis.
 31. When Clarke returned on March 18, 1885, he told Gabriel and the others that the petitions would be answered with bullets. The Metis prepared to defend their land and Gabriel was chosen as their military leader.
 32. As Clarke predicted, the government of Canada sent soldiers to settle the problem to which the Metis had tried to find a peaceful solution, and the so-called North-West Rebellion had begun.
 33. Although the Metis were outnumbered, under Gabriel's leadership they won the first battle at Duck Lake. After the battle at Fish Creek, which neither side won, the Metis were defeated at Batoche.
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34. After the Battle of Batoche, Louis Riel gave himself up. He was found guilty of treason and hanged in Regina.
 35. Gabriel fled to the United States to live in exile.
 36. Madeleine travelled south to be with Gabriel, but on the journey she became ill and died.
 37. For a short time Gabriel worked in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. Although he was granted amnesty in 1886, Gabriel continued to live in the United States for another two years.
 38. In 1890, at the age of 53, Gabriel returned to his home in the Saskatchewan District. He spent his time hunting, fishing and telling stories of the buffalo hunts and of the battles which the Metis had fought.
 39. Gabriel Dumont died on May 19, 1906 and was buried in the graveyard at Batoche. Many people, Indian, Metis and white, came to his funeral to witness the burial of a great man.
 40. The development of this audiovisual kit was made possible with financial assistance from the Department of the Secretary of State.
 41. Writers: Martin Shulman, Calvin Racette, Lorna Payne
 42. Artist: Peter Myo
 43. Narrator: Stephen Fielden
 44. Music: Marcelle Nokony
 45. Sound Track: Richard Gustin Photography, Inc.
 46. © 1985 Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, Inc., Regina, Saskatchewan.

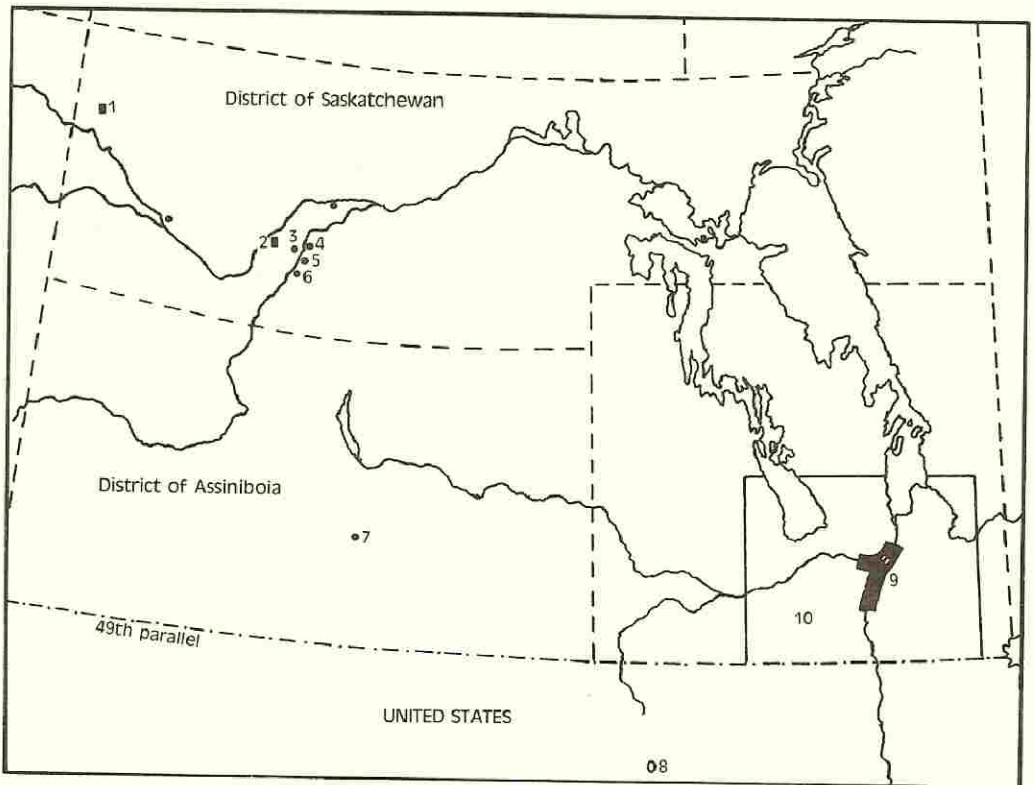
Suggested Questions:

1. Gabriel and the other children learned by watching and by doing. Are these methods similar to the way we learn today? Why?
 2. In what ways are Gabriel's boyhood experiences different from those of a boy in present-day society?
 3. How did the adults recognize that Gabriel was a young man?
 4. How was Gabriel chosen as the leader of the Metis?
 5. What type of work did the Metis people do to earn a living?
 6. How did the Metis leaders ensure that the people of their settlements were well cared for?
 7. What type of business did Gabriel operate at Gabriel's Crossing?
 8. What did the Metis do when their petitions for land rights were not answered?
 9. What did Gabriel do while living in exile in the United States?
 10. Why did many people come to the graveyard at Batoche when Gabriel was buried?
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11. Briefly discuss with the class the terms Metis, culture and values. Suggested lead-in questions are:
- Who are the Metis?
 - What do we mean by culture and how does it change?
 - What are values? How do people's values differ?

Suggested Activities:

1. Write or draw a biographical sketch of Gabriel Dumont.
2. Beside each of the following, place the number (from the map) which matches the location. (Answers on page 16.)
 - the Red River Settlement (where Gabriel was born)
 - Fort Pitt (where young Gabriel lived for a time)
 - the Grand Coteau (where the Metis defeated the Dakota)
 - Fort Carlton (where Gabriel met childhood friends)
 - the original province of Manitoba
 - St. Laurent (where Gabriel became president of the community)
 - Duck Lake (where the first battle of the resistance was fought)
 - Fish Creek (where the second battle of the resistance was fought)
 - Batoche (where the third battle of the resistance was fought)
 - Regina (where Louis Riel was hanged).



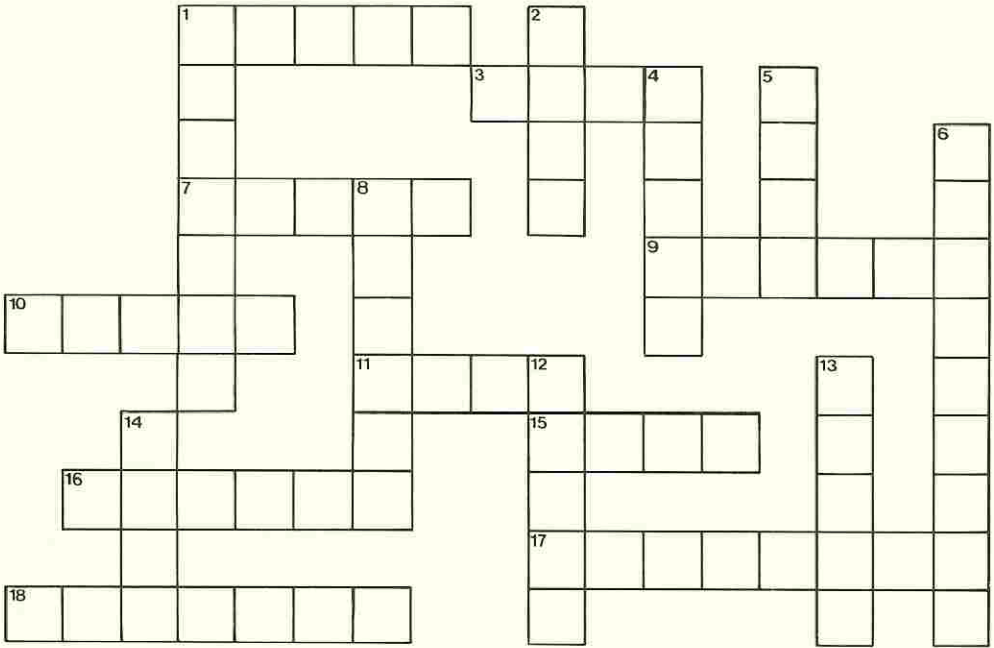
3. Complete the word search. (Answers on page 16.)

G	R	I	G	H	T	S	M	F	L	H	T
F	A	R	M	N	Z	Y	R	R	E	F	A
M	W	B	U	F	F	A	L	O	P	V	M
A	N	H	R	R	L	X	B	S	E	E	N
N	O	I	T	I	T	E	P	D	T	L	E
I	I	P	R	E	E	N	E	R	I	T	S
T	S	A	A	N	F	L	M	I	T	T	T
O	E	R	D	D	U	B	M	B	R	A	Y
B	S	T	E	S	R	X	I	A	C	B	S
A	M	E	T	I	S	E	C	A	E	P	W
E	N	I	E	L	E	D	A	M	R	W	A
L	O	C	O	M	M	U	N	I	T	Y	L

amnesty
 axe
 battle
 birds
 buffalo
 carts
 community
 farm
 ferry
 friends
 furs
 Gabriel
 trap

hunt
 laws
 Le Petit
 Madeleine
 Manitoba
 Metis
 noises
 peace
 pemmican
 petition
 rights
 trade

4. Complete the crossword puzzle. (Answers on page 16.)



Across

1. Cradle_____.
3. Red River _____.
7. A type of boat.
9. Gabriel _____.
10. Gabriel named this "Le Petit".
11. Twice a year the Metis went on a buffalo _____.
15. Louis _____.
16. What Gabriel heard one night.
17. Dried meat, fat and berries.
18. Site of the final Resistance battle.

Down

1. Large animals which lived on the prairie.
2. Rules.
4. To exchange one item for another.
5. Gabriel was born on a _____.
6. What the Metis sent to the government in Ottawa.
8. The Metis tried to obtain their land _____.
12. What Gabriel used to obtain furs.
13. Gabriel helped negotiate _____.
14. Trading _____.

-
5. Using the filmstrip as a guide, place yourself as a character in one of the scenes. Write a descriptive story about your character and the events of the scene.
 6. Research the locations of important Metis communities, Hudson's Bay Company forts, water routes, etc. In a class activity, create a mural to turn this research into a geographical learning experience.
 7. Research the importance of the buffalo hunt to the Metis. This should include making a list of items the Metis obtained from the buffalo, a description of the method the Metis used to hunt these animals, the laws of the hunt and a brief description of how pemmican was made. This could be done as a group activity, with each member of the group researching one aspect of the project.
 8. Research the work of a trapper. This should include a description of various traps and trapping methods, how skins are stretched and cured, what happens to furs once the trapper has sold them. This activity could be done individually or in groups.
 9. Role play the incident in which Gabriel alerted the camp, then learned that the "attackers" were a herd of buffalo. How might Gabriel have felt? Why was the gun an appropriate gift to give Gabriel at this time?
 10. Role play a situation in which the class wants to go on a field trip to a place of their own choosing. They have planned the trip carefully and each has paid \$5 to cover bus rental. They are ready to go and a bus is there to take them, however, there is no bus driver. Neither the bus company nor the principal can be contacted. As the day goes by, they realize that they will not be able to make the trip and their money will not be refunded. How do the students feel? Draw a parallel with the Metis' petitions for ownership of their lands. (For 12 years their petitions went unanswered.) How do you think the Metis felt? How would the students react if, at the end of the day, they must stay in to make up for the time they'd 'wasted'? How might the Metis have felt when they heard that their petitions would be answered with bullets?
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Recommended Reading

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