

First flag of the Metis Nation 1815



Flag of the Metis Provisional Government 1870



Metis Battle Standard 1885

METIS FLAGS

"At half past noon, about 48 Halfbreeds, Canadians, Freemen, and Indians came all riding on horseback with their flag flying blue, and a figure of an eight horizontally in the middle...Triumphantly the Metis hoisted the flag of a New Nation."

On that day, June 25, 1815, Cuthbert Grant forced the Selkirk Settlers, under Peter Fiddler, to sign a treaty restoring peace, amity and control of trading.

This was the first Metis uprising and the first Metis flag.

The Provisional Government under Louis Riel, adopted another flag for a yet stronger Nation in 1870 at the Red River.

For a people at war in 1885 another flag was recognized as the Metis symbol. This one was the Metis Battle Standard.

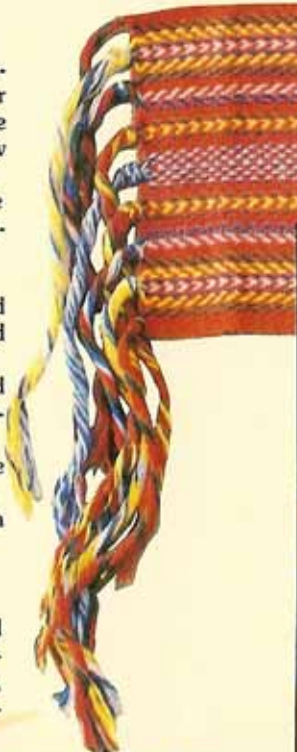
From the ban on pemmican export in 1814 to today, the Metis Flags have time and time again waved unnoticed. However, the need for a national symbol still burns within the hearts of the modern day Metis.

THE SASH

The sash originated from the Northern Manitoba and Quebec regions. Made by Metis women who spent long, arduous hours, finger weaving this colorful symbol of our past, it was often worn by men on the trail so that repairs on harnesses or snowshoes could be made from the material.

This colorful blend of wool averaged six feet long and six inches wide. Each pattern represented different families, having a purpose similar to a family Coat of Arms.

Today the sash, made and perfected by the Metis women, has become like Riel, an important part of our history and a symbol of a revived tradition.



Metis scouts, the 49th Rangers, with the North American Boundary Commission 1872-75.

Photo: Archives of Canada

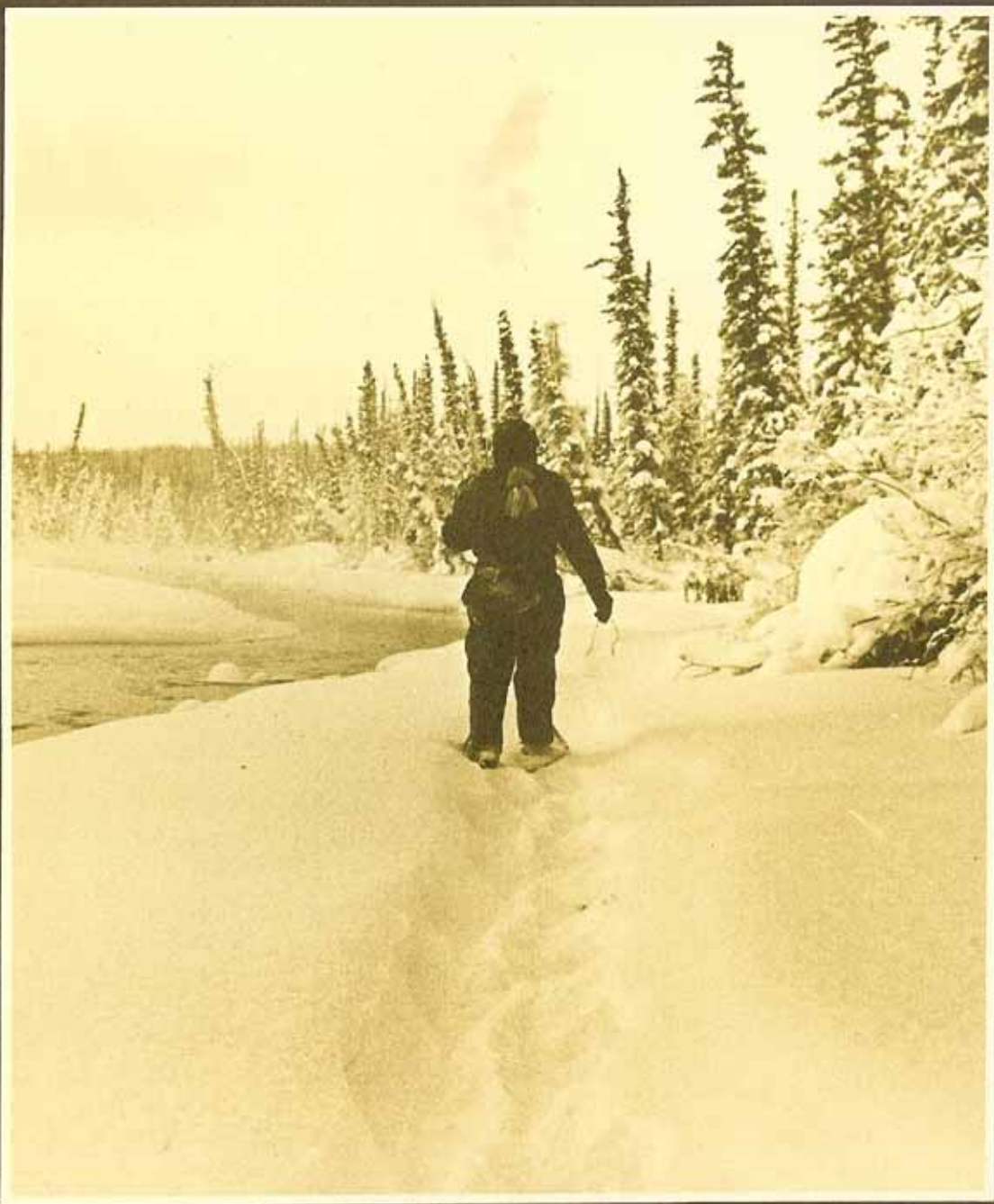


Photo: John Cuthand

Trapping



Top: HBC 1 - was a square token given for each White Fox hide.

Centre: MB - Made Beaver - this token was given when the top layer of the fur had been removed from the hide.

Bottom: North West Company token.

When Western Canada first became settled, Metis people depended on trapping and hunting as their main source of survival. There were two trading companies at that time, which were called the North West Company and the Hudson Bay Company. These companies were always competing against each other in trying to get the Metis to work for them. The Metis were well known for being excellent trappers and hunters. Due to the shortage of money in Canada in those days, each company had its own form of paying the trappers by using what was then called tokens. These tokens were then exchanged by the Metis people at various trading posts for the supplies they needed.

NEW BREED

JANUARY

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|--------|----------|
| New Moon January 6 ● | First Quarter January 13 ◐ | Full Moon January 20 ○ | Last Quarter January 27 ◑ | New Years Day 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

1870 - For seventeen days the 40 delegates discuss their List of Rights and the Provisional Government was established with Riel as president.

Provisional Government 1870



Louis Riel and his Council 1869. Top row: Charles Larocque, Pierre Delorme, Thomas Bunn, Xavier Dagee, Ambroise Lepine, Baptiste Tourond and Thomas Spence. Centre row: Pierre Poitras, John Bruce, Louis Riel, W.B. O'Donoghue, Francois Dauphinais. Front row: H.F. O'Lone and Paul Proulx.

see inside back page for more information

NEW BREED

FEBRUARY

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|----------|--------|-------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 [*] | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 <small>1870 - The first meeting of Provisional Government in the Red River.</small> | 11 | 12 | 13 | Valentines Day 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| New Moon February 4 ● | First Quarter February 11 ◐ | Full Moon February 18 ○ | Last Quarter February 26 ◑ | | | |



Photo: Archives of Canada

“Interior of Metis dwelling, 1870”

The interior of the Metis dwelling was one large room and the walls were whitewashed. A single door occupied a space between two parchment windows, which allowed some light to enter. The floor was either logs or earth. A huge clay hearth occupied most of the rear wall. A curtained bed for the parents and cots for the children lined the other walls. A large wooden table and wooden benches were located in the centre of the room. The furniture usually consisted of an arm chair, a rocking chair, a small mirror, several chests and buffalo robes and basic cooking utensils on the hearth. On the walls hung a flint-lock gun, a powder horn, a bag full of shot, an axe, a crucifix or a statue of a saint, some religious pictures and portraits and some string. There was also usually a simple wooden kitchen cupboard to store food and supplies.

NEW BREED

MARCH

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--|--|--|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Ash Wednesday 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | | 1870 - Ambroise Lepine, presiding officer of the court martial delivers the sentence of death to Thomas Scott. | 1870 - Thomas Scott is executed for "insubordination". | | | |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| | | | | | | |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| | | | | Feast of St. Joseph, patron saint of the Metis. 1885 - Pierre Parenteau elected president of Riel's Provisional Government at Batoche. | | |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| | 1870 - Alfred Scott and Father Ritchot are the first two Provisional Government Delegates to leave for Ottawa. | | | 1885 - Dumont, Riel and 30 Metis win the Battle of Duck Lake against Croziers 177 North West Mounted Police. | | |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | New Moon March 6 ● | First Quarter March 12 ◐ | Full Moon March 20 ○ | Last Quarter March 28 ◑ |
| | | | | | | |

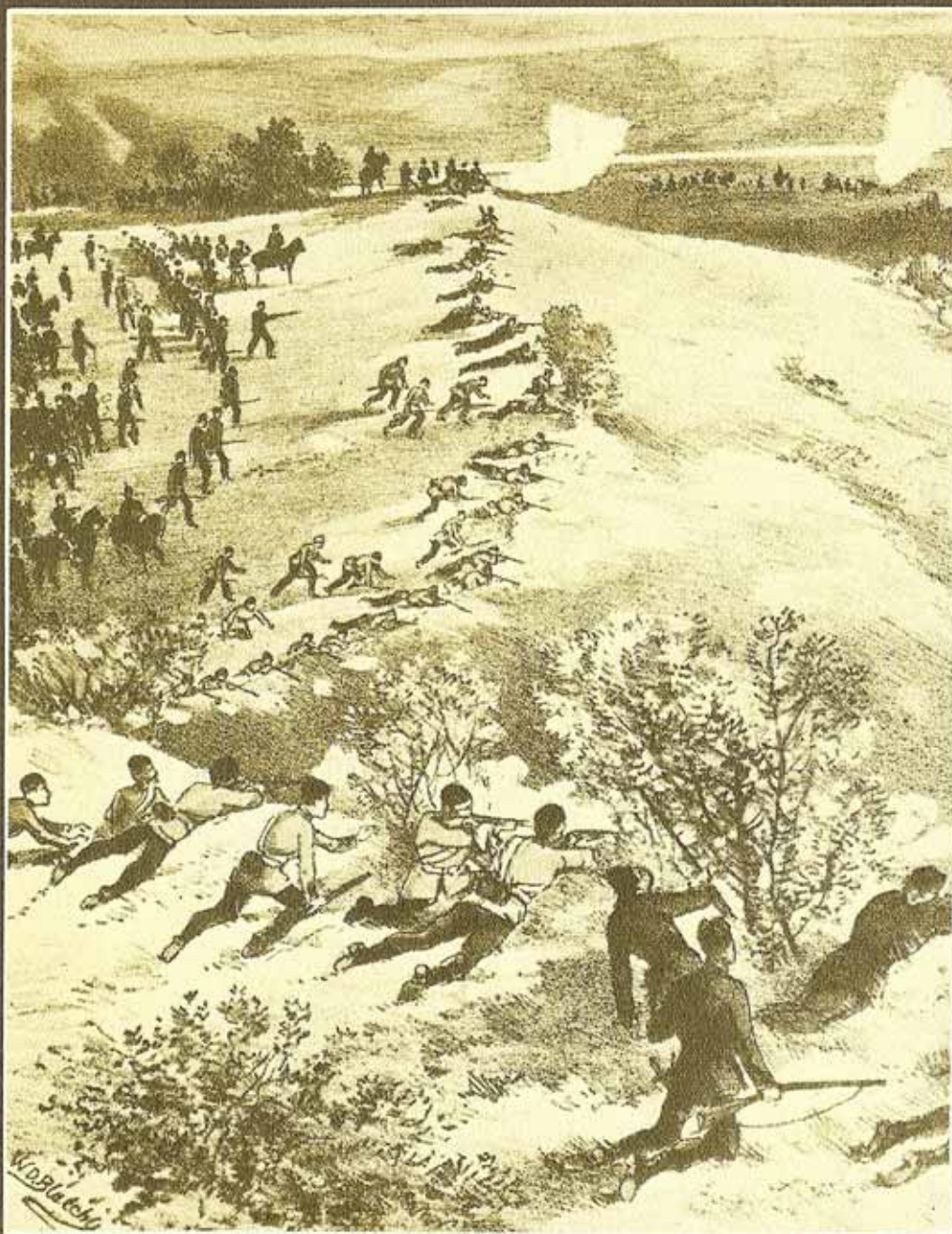


Photo: Archives of Canada

Fish Creek, 1885



Top: Gabriel Dumont

Left: Artists sketch of the Battle of Fish Creek

April 17th

Middleton reaches Clark's Crossing on the South Saskatchewan River. The Royal Grenadiers catch up to him, bringing his force to about 800 men. He divides his force into two columns - one on each side of the river.

April 24th

A mixed force of two hundred Metis, Cree, Saulteaux and Sioux with Gabriel Dumont as their leader engaged one column of Middleton's force numbering approximately 400 men and effectively delayed, for over two weeks, the expected attack on Batoche.

NEW BREED

APRIL

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|-----------|----------|--|--|
| New Moon April 4  | First Quarter April 11  | Full Moon April 19  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | Good Friday 17 | 18 |
| Easter Sunday 19 | Easter Monday 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 1885 - Dumont and 150 men battle Middleton's army of 1000 at Fish Creek. The Metis retreat to Batoche. | Last Quarter April 27  |



MASS GRAVE OF METIS
WHO FELL AT BATOCHÉ
1885

A worn and weathered wooden sign marks the mass grave of the Metis who fought and fell at Batoche in 1885. At the Annual Assembly at Batoche in August of 1979 there was a discussion concerning the condition of the grave yard. The Assembly felt that the site was poorly kept. It was suggested that one of the AMNSIS Locals be hired to take care of the graves and the surrounding area. \$2,500.00 in materials and cash was raised at the Assembly and the Batoche Memorial fund was established. The grave site has been cleaned up and a new picket fence has been erected around the mass grave site. It is hoped that in the near future a stone memorial will be erected in place of the weather worn wooden marker.

Burial site at Batoche

NEW BREED

MAY

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|--|---|----------|---|---|
| New Moon May 3  | First Quarter May 10  | Full Moon May 18  | Last Quarter May 26  | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 <small>1885 - Beginning of the Battle of Batoche. Middleton tries to use the steamer Northcote armed with a gatling gun to assault Batoche but the steamboat is rendered useless by the Metis.</small> |
| Mother's Day 10 | 11 | 12 <small>1870 - The Manitoba Act, incorporating most of the features of the Metis "List of Rights" receives royal assent. 1885 - The Metis are running out of ammunition and retreat from the trenches to the village against Middleton's superior fire power.</small> | 13 <small>1885 - The 250 survivors of the Metis force of 300 surrender to Middleton's army of 850.</small> | 14 | 15 <small>1885 - Riel gives himself up. Dumont, Nault and Dumas escape to Montana.</small> | 16 |
| 17 | Victoria Day 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 <small>1885 - Poundmaker surrenders to General Middleton and is imprisoned.</small> |
| 24/31 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |



Photo: Tawow, Book Society of Canada

The Yorkboat

In the early years of trade voyageurs and Metis travelled the many river and lake routes in search of furs. The birch bark canoe was by far the best method for travel. Originated from the Woodland, it had but one drawback - it lacked strength and durability. Some of the routes from York factory to Hudson Bay were suitable for a wooden boat and in 1835 William Sinclair, a Metis, developed a longer and larger boat which was capable of carrying larger loads. It had two means of power - it could either be rowed or sailed. The Hudson Bay quickly adopted the new boat because of this versatility. The Metis often referred to it as the man killer because of its size and weight. Too heavy to carry, it was dragged over portages and when a suitable wind was present, sails could be hoisted.

NEW BREED

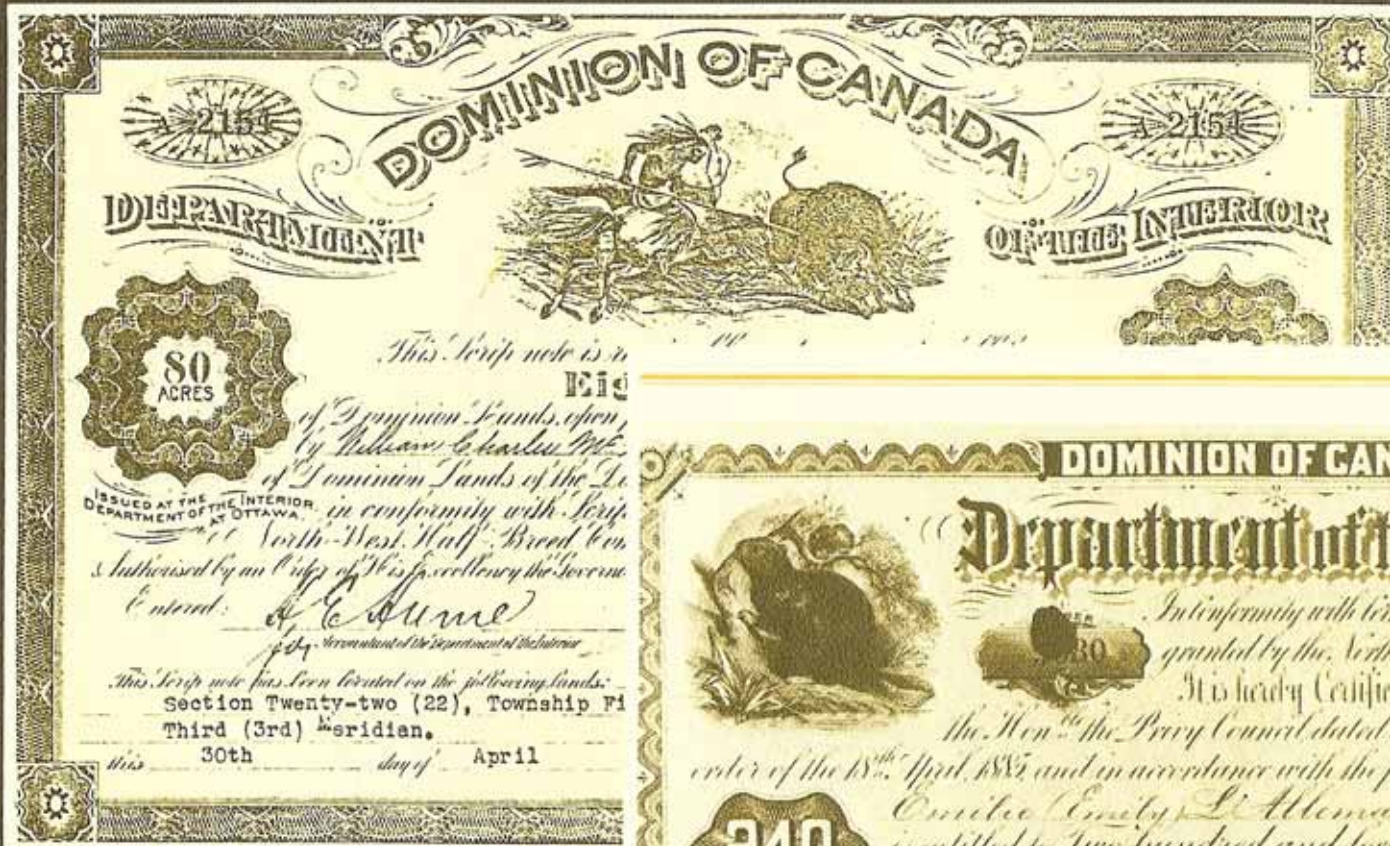
JUNE

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|-----------------|--------|---------|----------------------|--|------------------------|---------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | | | | 1884 - Gabriel Dumont, Michel Dumas, Moise Ouellette and James Isbister invite Riel to return to the North West. | | |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| Father's Day 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | New Moon June 2 ● | First Quarter June 9 ◐ | Full Moon June 17 ○ | Last Quarter June 24 ◑ |

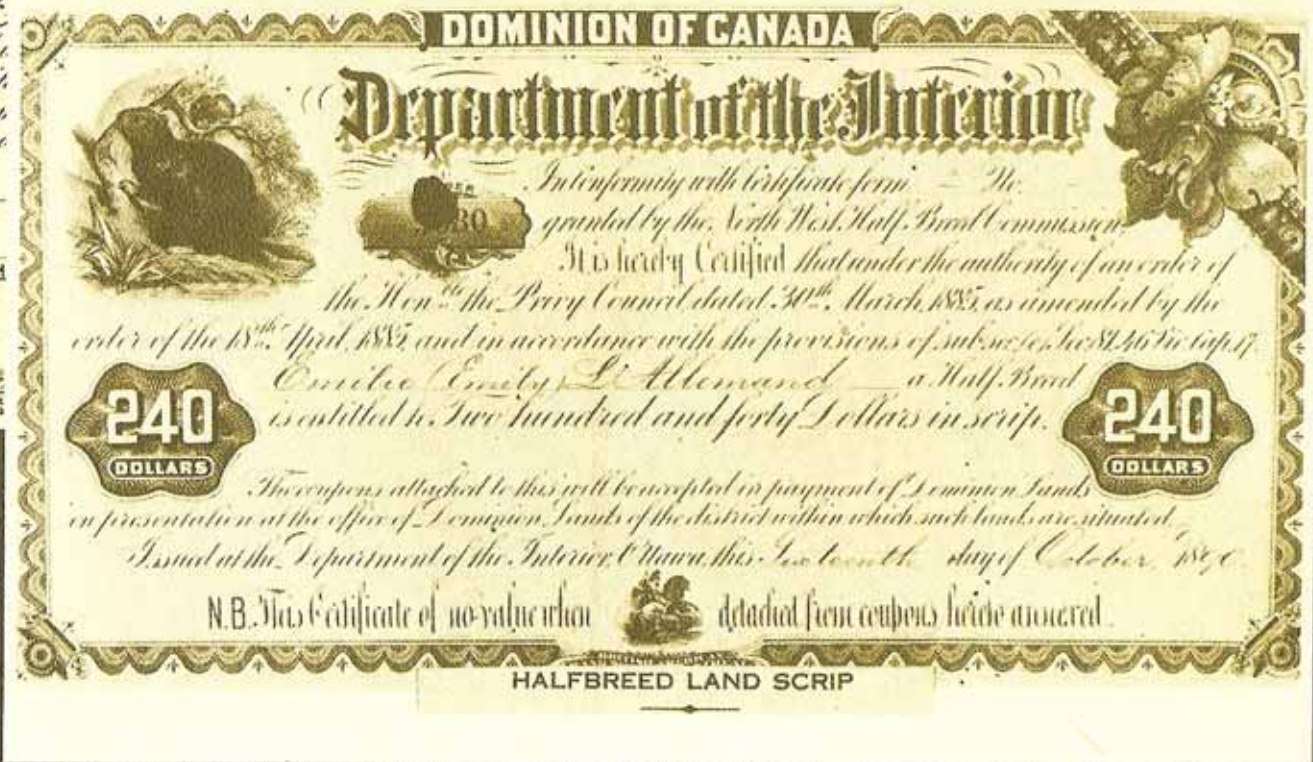
Scrip

Top: Land Scrip

Bottom: Money Scrip








Metis Scrip was a method used to distribute land allocations to Metis people which is alleged to have been a settlement of their "Indian Title". Scrip originated in the United States where it was first used in the distribution of land grants. The first halfbreed Scrip in Canada was issued to residents of the Red River during the 1870's. A Scrip note was a proper certificate which entitled the person to whom it was issued, to exchange it for either a given quantity or value of land. The original Scrip called "Money Scrip" entitled the bearer to Open Dominion Land to the value indicated on the Scrip note. Such Scrip was popular with speculators because it could be easily assigned from one person and could be readily exchanged for land.



Later, "Land Scrip" was issued which could only be exchanged by the allottee for the quantity of land indicated on the face of the Scrip note. This form of Scrip was not popular with Scrip speculators and as a result the bulk of the Scrip issued was Money Scrip. The first Scrip in the Northwest, including what is now Saskatchewan, was issued in July of 1885. In total, close to five million acres of land was distributed in Western Canada, using this method of distribution.

NEW BREED

JULY

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|---|--|--|-----------|---|--|
| New Moon July 1  | First Quarter July 8  | Full Moon July 16  | Dominion Day 1 <small>1885 - Big Bear surrenders at Fort Carlton and is imprisoned.</small> | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 <small>1885 - A formal charge of treason is laid against Louis Riel then in jail in Regina.</small> | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 <small>1870 - The North West territories formally becomes part of Canada and the small portion surrounding Red River becomes Manitoba, Canada's fifth province.</small> | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 <small>1885 - The trial of Louis Riel begins.</small> | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 <small>Metis National Holiday, the birthday of St. Joseph, patron saint.</small> | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 <small>1885 - Jury returns a verdict of guilty with a plea for mercy.</small> | Last Quarter July 24  New Moon July 30  |

The buffalo to the Indian and Metis was a source of social culture and economic livelihood. It is estimated by historians that between 1780-1810 the buffalo herds of the Plains contained as many as 60 million to 100 million, and by 1883 there were only 1000 buffalo left and at the point of extinction. The Indian and Metis were superb horsemen and hunters. The Metis acquired both Indian knowledge of the buffalo and European technology and values.

Their buffalo hunts were large and organized. For example, in 1860, 2,690 Metis took part in a buffalo hunt. The Metis came from two distinct bodies, one group from the Whitehorse Plains, the other from a Red River section. The two groups assembled at an agreed location around the Pembina Hills, to elect a governor and ten captains, the hunt being done in an open and democratic manner. Although each expedition slightly differed in terms of rules, it appeared to form a basic core which developed a sense of nationalism among the Metis:

1. No buffalo to be run on the Sabbath Day.
2. No party to fork 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. Any person convicted of theft, to be brought to the middle of the camp and the crier to call out his/her name adding the word "Thief" each time.

It was through these strictly enforced rules that cohesiveness developed a well disciplined group at all times and through these expeditions the Metis began to see themselves as a unique group in the Northwest. The rules were tough and so were the penalties for breaking them. The court was set up in a military fashion and the ten captains would then decide if the offender would be fined, flogged or banished.

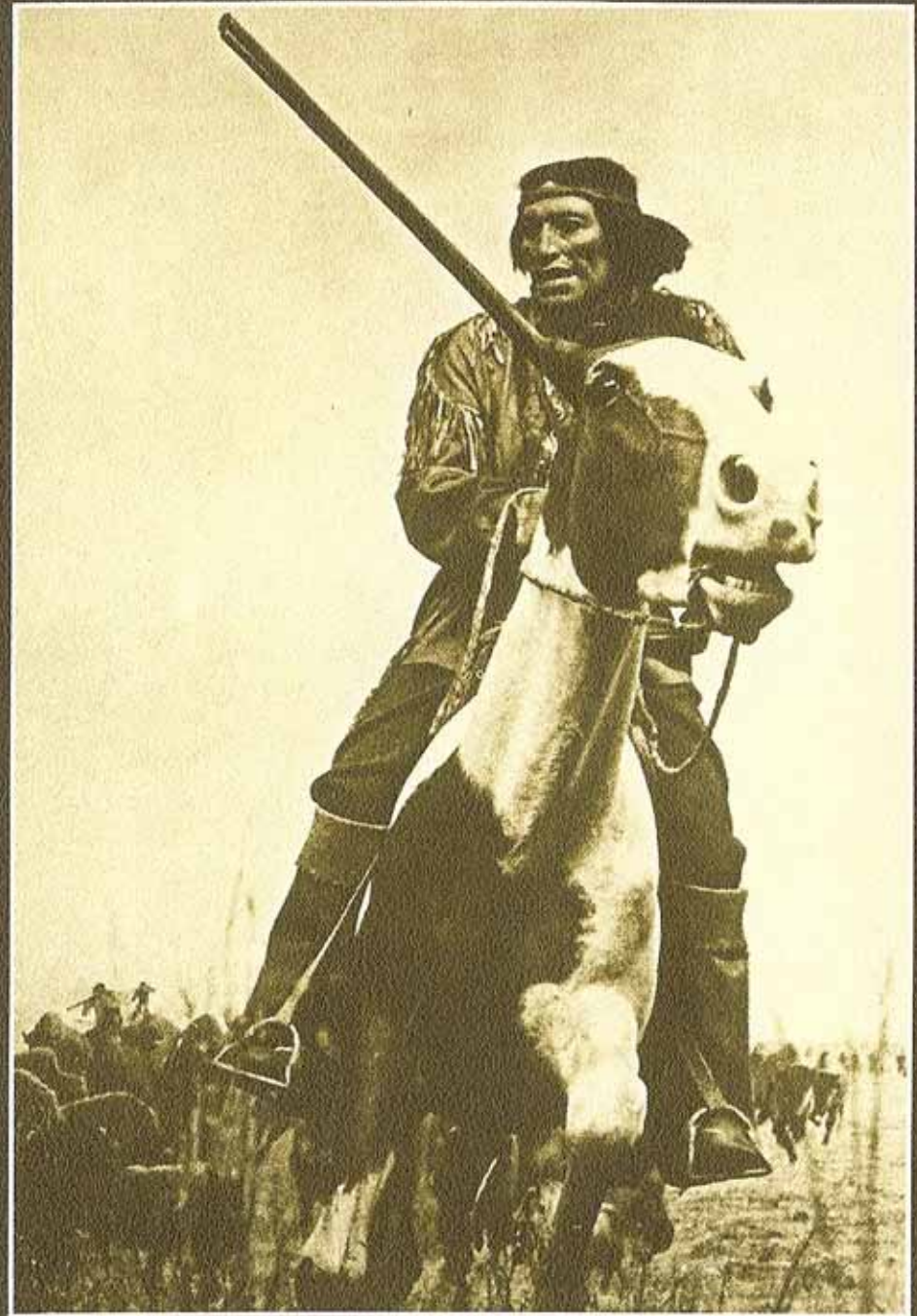
The method used by the Metis was known as "running the herds". After locating a herd, the scouts would then report to the main group. At a signal the Metis hunters would advance on the side of the herd in a straight formation at a slow trot. Position of advancing was important because of scent which could trigger off a stampede before being in good range.

In passing through a herd stampeding, prime buffalo cows were shot from almost point blank range through the heart. As the Metis hunters rode through at top speed on swift horses, it was necessary to be able to load a gun with powder horn and lead balls.

There was the ever-present danger of colliding with a buffalo and being thrown to the ground in the middle of a stampede, being trampled to death or a horse stepping into an animal burrow.

Every year there were normally two hunting expeditions which began in early spring and early fall. The early spring hunt was sought to bring back sufficient meat and hides to repay debts that Metis families accumulated over the winter with the Hudson Bay Company. In the fall, its primary objective was to store food for the upcoming winter. Therefore, it was the Metis who commercialized the buffalo hunt with concentrated food, better known as *pemmican*.

Having access to a reliable source of food which would not spoil and was easy to transport, fur traders were able to embark on long trading trips without worry about food supplies.



The Buffalo Hunt

NEW BREED

AUGUST

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|--|---|---|----------|--------|---|
| First Quarter August 7  | Full Moon August 15  | Last Quarter August 22  | New Moon August 29  | | | 1 <small>1885 - Riel's trial ended. Riel sentenced to death.</small> |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |



Photo: Edward Poitras, display Natural History Museum

The Red River Cart

see inside back page for more information

NEW BREED

SEPTEMBER

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|---|---------|-----------|--|--|----------|
| First Quarter September 6  | Full Moon September 14  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | Labor Day 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | Last Quarter September 20  | New Moon September 27  | |

1885 - Riel's original execution date.

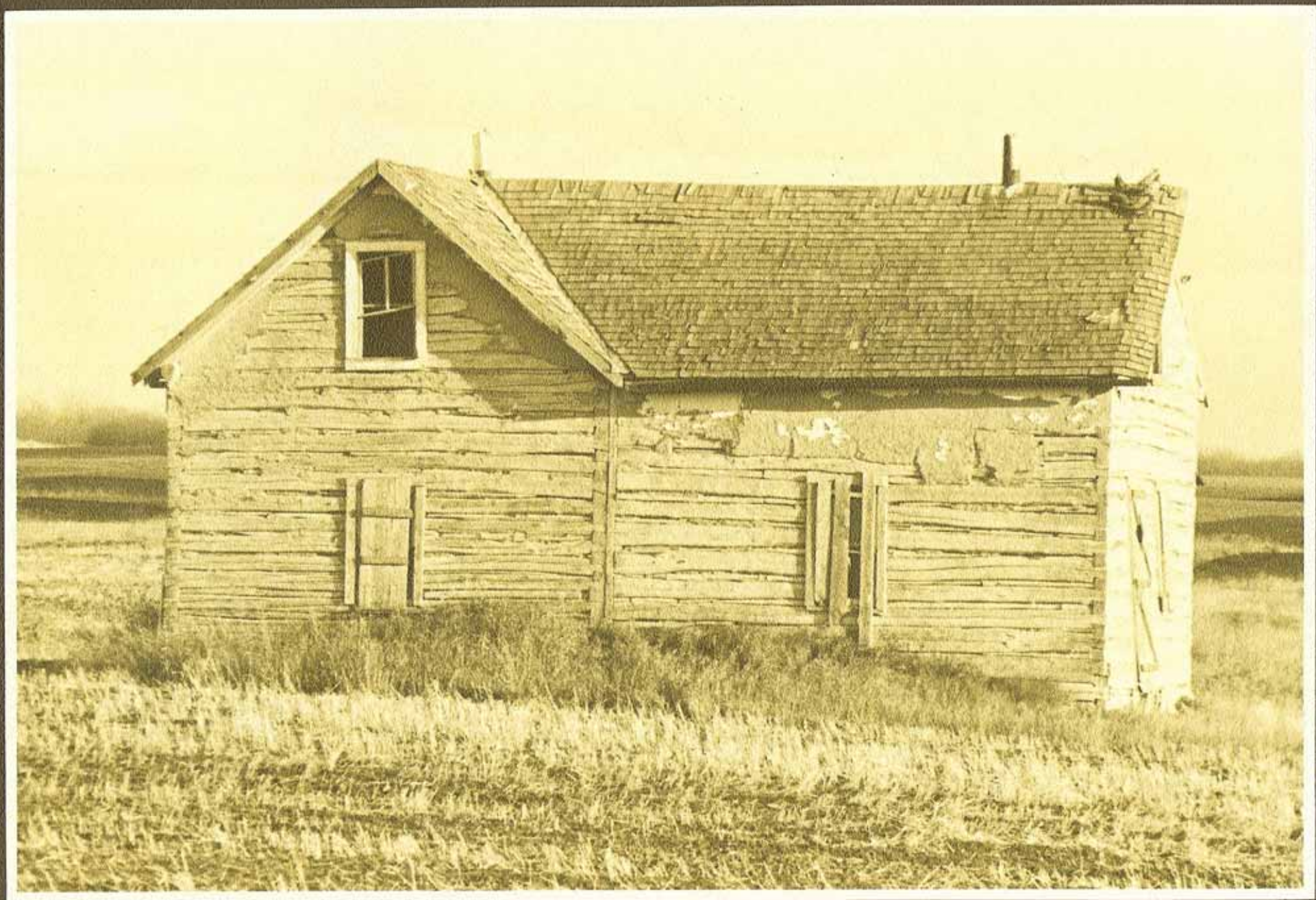


Photo: Elizabeth Nicholls

Log and Mortar House

see inside back page for more information


| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|---|--|--|--|--------|----------|
| First Quarter October 6  | Full Moon October 13  | Last Quarter October 19  | New Moon October 27  | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | Thanksgiving Day | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 1869 - The Metis warn Canadian Lieutenant Governor William McDougall not to enter Red River. | 1844 - Louis Riel is born at St. Boniface in present day Manitoba. 1885 - Riel's appeal for a new trial is denied. | 29 | 30 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |



Photo: Archives of Canada

Riel's Trial 1885

see inside back page for more information

NEW BREED

NOVEMBER

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--|---|--|---|---|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| | 1869 - Riel and a band of armed Metis occupy Fort Garry at Red River. | | | | | |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| | | | Remembrance Day | | | |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| | 1869 - Riel invites the parishes of Red River to send representatives to meet in convention at Fort Garry. 1885 - Riel is hanged in Regina. | | | 1869 - Hudson's Bay Company relinquishes its charter for the North West Territory to England. | | |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | First Quarter November 4  | Full Moon November 11  | Last Quarter November 18  | New Moon November 26  | |

Gabriel Dumont

(1837 - 1906)

Gabriel Dumont was essentially a man of the prairies, a leader of the Great Metis Buffalo Hunts and a man who felt a deep responsibility for his fellow man.

Dumont was born in 1837 near St. Boniface, Manitoba into a Metis family of French and Sarcee Indian heritage. In 1840, his family moved to Saskatchewan and settled near Batoche.

During the 1885 uprising with the Canadian Government, Dumont led his people into battle. He developed military strategies; had these been used, they would have been superior to the strategies Riel chose.

After the battles, Dumont escaped to the United States where he tried unsuccessfully to devise a plan to rescue Riel.

In 1886, the Canadian Government granted him a full pardon for his part in the confrontation of 1885, allowing him to return to Canada.

The GABRIEL DUMONT INSTITUTE OF NATIVE STUDIES AND APPLIED RESEARCH is named in honour of this great man and the ideals he held for Metis people.



Photo: Archives of Canada

NEW BREED

DECEMBER

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|----------|----------------------------|--|
| New Moon December 4 ● | First Quarter December 11 ◐ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 <small>1869 - Riel issued a "Declaration of the People of Rupert's Land and the North West".</small> | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 <small>1885 - Riel buried at St. Boniface, Manitoba.</small> |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 <small>1884 - Riel sends a petition to Ottawa listing the grievances of the white settlers and the Metis.</small> | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 <small>1869 - John Bruce resigned and Louis Riel became president of the National Committee in the Red River Settlement.</small> | 24 | Christmas Day 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | Full Moon December 18 ○ | Last Quarter December 26 ◑ |

Provisional Government List of Rights

The formal List of Rights, drawn up by the Provisional Governing Council of the Metis Nation, as the formal conditions for the entry of Rupert's Land into Confederation, December 1, 1869.

1. That the people have the right to elect their own Legislature.
2. That the Legislature have the power to pass all laws local to the Territory over the veto of the Executive by a two-thirds vote.
3. That no act of the Dominion Parliament (local to the Territory) be binding on the people until sanctioned by the Legislature of the Territory.
4. That all Sheriffs, Magistrates, Constables, School Commissioners, etc., be elected by the people.
5. A free Homestead and pre-emption Land Law.
6. That a portion of the public lands be appropriated to the benefit of Schools, the building of Bridges, Roads and Public Buildings.
7. That it be guaranteed to connect Winnipeg by Rail with the nearest line of Railroad, within a term of five years; the land grant to be subject to the Local Legislature.
8. That for the term of four years all Military, Civil and Municipal expenses be paid out of the Dominion funds.
9. That the Military be composed of the inhabitants now existing in the Territory.
10. That the English and French languages be common in the Legislature and Courts, and that all Public Documents and Acts of the Legislature be published in both languages.
11. That the Judge of the Supreme Court speak the English and French languages.
12. That Treaties be concluded and ratified between the Dominion Government and the several tribes of Indians in the Territory to ensure peace on the frontier.
13. That we have a fair and full representation in the Canadian Parliament.
14. That all privileges, customs and usages existing at the time of the transfer be respected.

The Declaration of Metis Rights was passed by the Annual General Assembly of AMNSIS on August 16, 1980. Below are a few excerpts similar to the List of Rights drawn up in 1869 by the Provisional Government.

- The right to have our own representatives in all legislative assemblies.
- The right to have public documents and acts published in our Native languages.
- The right to the use of our languages in legislative bodies and in the courts.
- The right to have legal actions against our people conducted in our languages before judges who are able to speak the languages and who have an understanding of the special cultural characteristics of our people.
- That we have the right to have our children educated in our language and to also educate our children in the traditional customs, beliefs, and art forms of our culture.

Log and Mortar House

The skill was inherited from the forebearers of the Metis who came from Normandy, France and to Saskatchewan by way of Quebec. Straight green logs were cut, skinned and cured on elevated wooden horses. Lime for mortar was manufactured by firing limestone in a homemade kiln, fired by wood, built into a steep hillside. It took a week of firing to reduce the stone to lime. This was often a period of visiting, dancing, singing and story telling amongst families while waiting for the unslaked lime to be ready and distributed to the participating families.

The unslaked lime was transported home in wooden barrels and when required mixed with water and sand for plaster or diluted with water and whitewash.

The Red River Cart

The Red River cart was introduced by the Metis people as a means of transporting trading goods to and from the many trading posts established in the early Northwest Territories.

The Red River cart typified the unique lifestyle of the Metis. Freightage created permanent employment for the people, giving them an incentive to work and a sense of pride and dignity. The long trips were treacherous and required much hard work but the Metis were happy people and accepted these aspects of life.

To the Metis, the cart was the key to commercializing the buffalo hunt. After the hunt, pemmican was freighted to trading posts of the Hudson Bay Company and North West Company. These supplies kept the men at the trading posts alive through the cold winters. It was also the staple food for the men who travelled back to Upper Canada.

The Metis and Red River cart played many important roles in the development of Western Canada. For example, modern highways, to a great extent, are built on the old main cart trails of the Metis freighters.

THE TRIAL OF LOUIS RIEL

Early on Saturday morning, May 16, 1885, Ottawa learned that:

"Riel was captured today at noon by three scouts named Armstrong, Diehl and Howrie four miles north of Batoche."

In truth the report was misleading. Riel had not been captured; he had surrendered. Guided by his own private vision of reality, he would carry his struggle to a new battleground (the court). He was not a man of action but a man of words. Single-handed he would confound his opponents and compel them to do him justice.

On May 17th, Riel and escort set off for Saskatoon. Middleton's original orders were to deliver Riel to Winnipeg but frantic telegrams from Ottawa changed the destination to Regina.

Under Manitoba law, Riel could have insisted on a mixed jury of whites and halfbreed; instead he was tried by local magistrates and a jury of six (the maximum allowed for the North-West Territories at that time).

Riel, himself, felt that it seemed unfitting that so modest a court should enjoy the same powers of life and death as a judge in all his majesty and twelve good and true men.

The government through its lawyers were to try Riel for High Treason using legal language from the Statute of Treasons of fourteenth century England. Those responsible for framing the indictment had a rigid responsibility: to ensure that the accused (Riel) did not escape through some obscure technicality. Charges were prepared for each of three occasions when the Metis had battled government forces at Duck Lake, Fish Creek and Batoche.

To avoid the trouble of finding a specific informant for each charge, the government selected a single symbolic citizen who would lay all charges in connection with the rebellion - A.D. Stewart, the British born police chief of Hamilton, Ontario. The Government had spared nothing to assemble an impressive legal team, while the defence (Riel) was technically penniless. However, Quebec funds were raised by the Liberals to pay for Riel's defence.

The official trial began on July 20th, 1885 in the offices of the Regina Land Company, with the Crown pushing to convict Riel and his lawyers using the grounds of insanity to gain him, his life. A procession of Crown witnesses came forward to testify to Riel's leadership in the uprising - while his own lawyers continued the attempt to show him as insane.

Riel himself, however, vigorously refused the plea of insanity. In two speeches to the jury, he destroyed this possible defense. He insisted that he was not a madman but a patriot, that he had seen the injustices and evils under which his people had suffered, and that he was determined to remove them. He demanded that he be tried by a special tribunal not only for the events of 1885 but also those of 1869-70 as well.

On July 25th, 1885, after a week of testimony Riel was pronounced "Guilty as Charged" by the jury of six, with Riel rejoicing that at least the verdict had cleared him of being mad.

The Magistrate proclaimed that Louis David Riel would hang on the 18th of September, 1885.

Several appeals were made and finally on November 16th, 1885 the sentence was carried out.

NEW BREED

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THE ROLE OF THE NEW BREED

Playing a vital role in the inter-relationship between the communities and the relationship between the community and the provincial organization of the Metis Association of Saskatchewan, the NEW BREED provides a two way printed vehicle which the community and our Association can utilize for purposes beneficial to both. Not only is the publication an information source to its Native readers but also to the non-native readers who hopefully gain a new understanding of the Native people in their battle for justice and recognition.

—THE ASSOCIATION OF METIS AND NON STATUS INDIANS OF SASKATCHEWAN—

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Acknowledgements and Credits:

Cliff Bunnie
Bill Blackbird
Larry Heinemann
Leanne Poitras
John Cuthand

Museum of Natural History, Regina, Sask.
Public Archives of Canada
Tawow, Book Society of Canada

The printing of this calendar is made possible through the joint funding of the Saskatchewan Department of Culture and Youth and the Association of Metis and Non Status Indians of Saskatchewan.