



Artwork by George Gingras

L is for Louis Riel

Louis Riel was a great leader of the Métis.
He is also known as the person who brought Manitoba into Confederation.

L si poor Louis Riel

Louis Riel si tay li miyEUR aen niikaaniishtamoowaat lii Michif.
Miina wiiya ka kii piihtikwataat li Manitoba daan li payii di Canada.



L is for Louis Riel

Louis Riel was a great leader of the Métis. He is also known as the person who brought Manitoba into Confederation.

L si poor Louis Riel

Louis Riel si tay li miiyeur aen niikaaniishtamoowaat lii Michif.
Miina wiiya ka kii pihtikwataat li Manitoba daan li payii di Canada.

On October 22, 1844 Louis Riel was born in St. Boniface, **Red River** (now Winnipeg, Manitoba). His parents were **Julie (née Lagimodière) Riel** and **Louis Riel Sr.** His childhood was filled with religion. At fourteen, he was chosen to go to the College de Montréal in order to become a priest. In 1865, he left school after his father died. Louis Riel then went to work at a Montréal law firm. He returned to Red River in 1868.

During the **Red River Resistance** (1869-70), Louis Riel led those Métis who were upset about the **Hudson's Bay Company's** sale of **Rupert's Land** to Canada in 1869. This sale happened without the input of the Métis and **First Nations**. The Métis wanted their land and way of life protected by the Canadian government before the transfer took place. When the negotiations failed, the Métis formed a **Provisional Government** because there was no government in place in the territory. They then drew up a **List of Rights**. These were a set of **laws** to protect the Métis' **rights** to the land and their way of life. The passage of these laws led to the creation of Manitoba in 1870, and secured Louis Riel's place as the founder of Manitoba.

Many in Ontario were unhappy with Louis Riel for leading the **resistance**. He fled to the United States, but not before being twice elected to Parliament. He was not able to take his seat in Parliament because a bounty, or a capturing fee, was placed upon him. In the 1880s, he taught school in what is now Montana, married **Marguerite** Monette dite Bellehumeur, and had two children: Jean-Louis and Marie-Angélique. Another child died as an infant. Jean-Louis and Marie-Angélique both died before reaching adulthood.

In 1884, Louis Riel returned to Canada to aid the **Batoche** Métis in their negotiations with the **federal government**. They were worried that Ottawa was not dealing with their desire to gain **title** to their lands. Negotiations failed, and another **Provisional Government** was formed. Prime Minister **John A. Macdonald** then sent troops out west. The Métis defended themselves during the **1885 Resistance** and won a few battles, but they lost the war at the **Battle of Batoche** (May 9-12, 1885). Louis Riel surrendered on May 15, 1885. He was soon tried for **treason** and was hung in Regina on November 16, 1885. The Métis honour his memory on **Louis Riel Day**, which is held every November 16. Manitoba also calls its family day holiday in February, "*Louis Riel Day*."

Other Resources:

Barkwell, Lawrence J., L. Dorion, and D. R. Préfontaine, eds. *Metis Legacy: A Metis Historiography and Annotated Bibliography*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2001.

Barkwell, Lawrence J. *Veterans and Families of the 1885 Northwest Resistance*. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2011.

Pelletier, Joanne. *Métis Historical Booklet Series: Louis Riel; The Red River Insurgence; and The North-West Resistance of 1885*. Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1985. (Available online at www.metismuseum.ca).

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

