

# LOUIS RIEL DAY NOVEMBER 16

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## **ABOUT** (From: [www.metisnation.org](http://www.metisnation.org))

Louis Riel Day is held every year on November 16 across the Métis homelands. November 16 is the anniversary of Riel's execution in 1885. During that year, Riel led Métis people in the Northwest Resistance, which was a stand against the Government of Canada because it was encroaching on Métis rights and their way-of-life. The Métis were defeated at the siege of Batoche and the Canadian government captured Riel. He was eventually put on trial where he was convicted of treason and executed. As a result, Métis people across Canada were labeled as traitors and for generations many felt the need to hide their Métis culture and heritage. Despite this oppression, many Métis people found a way to preserve their way-of-life and passed it on to current generations. Today, the strength of the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) is a testament to the courage of their ancestors.

Riel's unjust execution is well-known but it is important to also recognize the political gains he made through the establishment of a Provisional Government in Manitoba. Riel's success in negotiating Manitoba into Confederation and the protection of minority language rights, laid the groundwork for his vision of a Canada that included the Métis Nation and protected Métis rights.

Although Louis Riel Day commemorates one of the great tragedies of Canadian history, it is also a day to celebrate Métis culture and the continuing progress that Métis people are making in fulfilling Riel's dream of Métis taking their rightful place within Confederation.

Every year on November 16th, MNO citizens, MNO Chartered Community Councils and communities hold events across the province to celebrate Métis culture, recognize the many contributions of the Métis to Canada, and to highlight the struggles that Métis continue to face.

In addition, a special ceremony is always held at the Provincial Legislature at Queen's Park in Toronto. Queen's Park is home to the Northwest Rebellion Monument and the Legislative Building. Ironically, the Legislature is where a price was put on Louis Riel's head and the monument recognizes the Canadian soldiers who fought in the Northwest Resistance against the Métis.

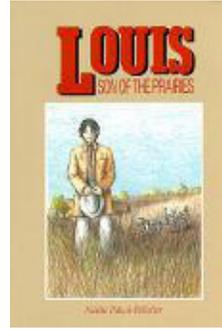
More information available here: [www.metisnation.org](http://www.metisnation.org)

# Book List

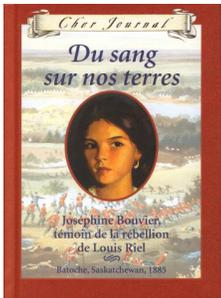
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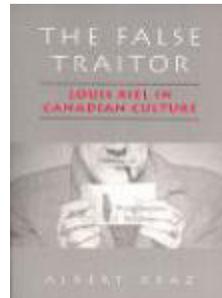
**Louis, Fils des Prairies (Louis, Son of the Prairie)** is the French language edition of *Louis, Son of the Prairies* about the early life of Métis leader, Louis Riel.



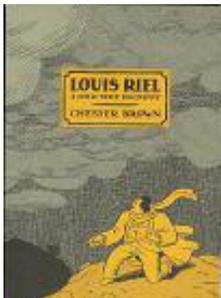
**Louis, Son of the Prairies, 4th Printing** is a publication from Pemmican Publications about the early life of Métis leader, Louis Riel.



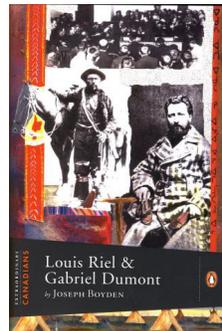
**Du Sang Sur Nos Terres: Joséphine Bouvier, Témoin de la Rébellion de Louis Riel, (Blood Upon Our Land)** is the French language edition of *Blood Upon Our Land: The North West Resistance Diary of Josephine Bouvier* by Maxine Trottier.



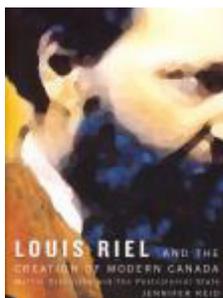
**False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture** The nineteenth-century Métis politician and mystic Louis Riel has emerged as one of the most popular - and elusive - figures in Canadian culture.



**Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography** Graphic novel about the historical events surrounding the life and times of Métis leader Louis Riel who took on the Canadian government, the Queen, and the military.



**Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont** is part of the Extraordinary Canadians Series and is written by noted author Joseph Boyden.



**Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State** by professor of religion Jennifer Reid offers a framework for rethinking the geopolitical significance of the modern Canadian state, the historic role of Confederation in establishing the country's collective self-image, and the narrative space through which Riel's voice speaks to these issues.

From: <http://www.metisnation.org>

# WHO ARE THE MÉTIS

The Métis are a distinct Aboriginal people with a unique history, culture, language and territory that includes the waterways of Ontario, surrounds the Great Lakes and spans what was known as the historic Northwest. The Métis Nation is comprised of descendants of people born of relations between Indian women and European men. The initial offspring of these unions were of mixed ancestry. The genesis of a new Aboriginal people called the Métis resulted from the subsequent intermarriage of these mixed ancestry individuals.

Distinct Métis settlements emerged as an outgrowth of the fur trade, along freighting waterways and watersheds. In Ontario, these settlements were part of larger regional communities, interconnected by the highly mobile lifestyle of the Métis, the fur trade network, seasonal rounds, extensive kinship connections and a shared collective history and identity.

## SYMBOLS & TRADITIONS

Historically the Métis were strongly associated with the North West Company (NWC), a fur trading entity in competition with the Hudson Bay Company (HBC) and they fought often for NWC causes. In a gift giving ceremony in 1814, NWC partner Alexander MacDonnell presented the Métis with this flag and it soon became a trademark for the nation. The Métis flag is carried today as a symbol of continuity and pride.



## MÉTIS SASH

Perhaps the most prominent symbol of the Métis Nation is the brightly coloured, woven sash. In the days of the Voyageur, the sash was both a colourful and festive belt and an important tool worn by the hardy tradesmen, doubling as a rope when needed. Not only functional, the sash is colourful and identifiable as Métis apparel. The sash itself served as a key holder, first aid kit, washcloth, towel, and as an emergency bridle and saddle blanket. Its fringed ends could become a sewing kit when the Métis were on a buffalo hunt.

The art of sash weaving was brought to the western regions of Canada by Voyageurs who encountered the bright 'scarves' through contact with French Canadians.

The finger-weaving technique used to make the sash was firmly established in Eastern Woodland Indian Traditions. The technique created tumplines, garters and other useful household articles and items of clothing. Plant fibres were used prior to the introduction of wool.

Europeans introduced wool and the sash, as an article of clothing, to the Eastern Woodland peoples. The Six Nations Confederacy, Potawatomi, and other Indigenous nations in the area blended the two traditions to produce the finger-woven sash.

The French settlers of Québec created the Assumption variation of the woven sash. Sashes were a popular trade item manufactured in a cottage industry in the village of L'Assomption, Québec. The Québécois and the Métis of Western Canada were their biggest customers. Local Métis artisans also made sashes. Sashes of Indigenous or Métis manufacture tended to be of a softer and looser weave, and beads were frequently incorporated into the design.

The Métis share the sash with two other groups who also claim it as a symbol of nationhood and cultural distinction. It was worn by eastern woodland Indigenous peoples as a sign of office in the 19th century, and French Canadians wore it during the Lower Canada Rebellion in 1837. It is still considered to be an important part of traditional dress for both these groups.

The sash has acquired new significance in the 20th century, now symbolizing pride and identification for Métis people. Manitoba and Saskatchewan have both created "The Order of the Sash" which is bestowed upon members of the Métis community who have made cultural, political or social contributions to their people.

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## FIDDLE MUSIC

The fiddle has figured prominently in the lifestyle of the Métis people for hundreds of years. It is the primary instrument for accompanying the Métis jig.

The famous 'Red River Jig' has become the centrepiece of Métis music. Since this European instrument was exceedingly expensive in early Canada, especially for grassroots Métis communities, many craftsmen learned how to make their own.

The fiddle is still in use today and plays a prominent role in celebrations as a symbol of our early beginnings and the joyful spirit in which we lived and grew. Fiddle and jigging contests are always popular events and provide an opportunity to showcase the fiddle as a symbol of Métis nationhood and pride.

## JIGGING

The Red River Jig, the unique dance developed by the Métis people, combines the intricate footwork of Indigenous dancing with the instruments and form of European music. Often the Métis made their own fiddles out of available materials because they could not afford the European imports.

Traditionally, dancing started early in the evening and would last until dawn. Witnesses were often dumbfounded by the energy and vitality evident during celebrations which was matched only by the long, arduous days of labour necessary to keep Métis communities running.

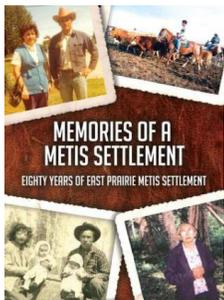
Métis people continue to enjoy jigging, and have local, provincial and national dance teams who attend conferences, exhibitions and powwows.

## MICHIF LANGUAGE

The Métis are a distinct Aboriginal people with a unique history, culture and territory that includes the waterways of Ontario, surrounds the Great Lakes and spans what was known as the historic Northwest. The citizens are descendants of people born of relations between Indigenous women and European men who developed a combination of distinct languages that resulted in a new Métis specific language called Michif. In Ontario, Michif is a mixture of old European and old First Nation languages and is still spoken today by some in the Métis community. Efforts are underway to rescue and preserve this critical component of Métis culture.

## Book List

(Available at [goodminds.com](http://goodminds.com))

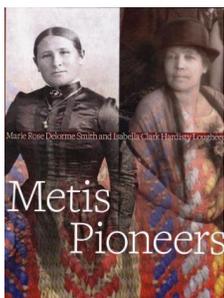


**Memories of a Metis Settlement: Eighty Years of East Prairie Metis Settlement, with Firsthand Memories 1939 to Today** published by Theytus in 2018 is a brief account of one Metis community in Alberta.



### **Li Saennchur Fleshii di Michif: Thomas and the Metis Sash**

This bilingual title is written by Bonnie Murray and the Michif translation is by Rita Flamand. When Thomas works on an art project for school his mother tells him about the history of the Metis Sash and what it means to the Metis people today.



**Metis Pioneers** In 'Metis Pioneers' MacKinnon compares the survival strategies of two Métis women who settled in southern Alberta as the fur trade declined in favour of paper trade and a changing social landscape.



### **Kohkum's Babushka: A Magical Metis-Ukrainian Tale**

This unique modern oral tradition of a first encounter between a Metis family and an immigrant family.