



# Métis Nationalist Voice

Volume 2, Issue 6

August/September/October 2021

Métis Nation Issues and Interests

## The Manitoba Métis Federation Takes a Stand in Defense of the Métis Nation

by Clem Chartier

Inside this  
issue:

Ile a la Crosse  
Boarding  
School

Sara Riel

Cuthbert  
Grant

Fall Buffalo  
Hunt

Editorial

On September 28, 2021 the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) wrote two letters to the Métis National Council. The first letter announced the withdrawal of the MMF from the Métis National Council (MNC) and the Métis National Council Secretariat Inc. (MNCSI), an official notification pursuant to the MNCSI By-laws that the MMF would no longer be part of the MNC and that the “MNC and MNCSI Inc. is not authorized to represent or speak on behalf of the MMF and the Manitoba Métis, also known as the Red River Métis”.

The second letter, also announcing the withdrawal of the MMF from the MNC was copied to the Members of the MNC General Assembly, stating that the MMF is taking this action because the MNC “has abandoned the MMF and the true Métis Nation”. This has resulted from actions of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan and Métis Nation of Alberta Presidents in their refusal “to take action against the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) for its registration of thousands of non-Métis Nation people as MNO members”.

This has led to the undermining of Métis Nation citizenship and a distortion of Métis Nation identity, resulting in the weakening of our Nation. Their actions in support of the MNO also threatens

the integrity of the Métis Nation’s traditional homeland in western Canada and is an attempt to rewrite Métis Nation history.

In reference to these developments, President David Chartrand declared:

*“Today, I stand as the President of the Red River Métis, also known as the Manitoba Métis – the origin, root, and core of the Métis Nation – against the four Governing Members admitting people into our Nation who don’t belong to us. No matter what they call themselves – the “root-ancestors metis”, the “voyageur metis”, the “Powley metis” – they will never belong to us. The MMF is the only government that will defend our definition and never allow it to be distorted”.*

Based on the fact that the *Manitoba Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement* entered into between the MMF and Canada, which has no geographic boundaries and recognizes and affirms that MMF as the existing government of the Red River Métis regardless of where they live, President Chartrand has made it clear that his government will protect all Métis Nation citizens wherever they may live, both

inside and outside of Manitoba.

To this end, President Chartrand wrote:

*“As our new agreement has no geographic boundaries, the MMF will continue to provide national leadership for the descendants of the Red River Métis. We take this national responsibility very seriously. We will continue to protect and strengthen the historic Métis Nation rooted in Red River and enhance the nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with Canada. We are developing the overall strategy and detailed plans to strengthen our governance across both national and international borders. Our governance will continue to be built on the solid and enduring bedrock of our Nation and our Homeland.”*

This certainly is a positive opportunity to ensure the on-going successes of the Métis Nation and in particular the protection and enhancement of Métis Nation citizenship, identity, and homeland.

***The Métis Nationalist Voice, as this new nation-building process unfolds will bring you further updates.***

## Memorial to Métis Residential School Survivors Unveiled

by Clem Chartier



On Thursday, October 30, 2021 a beautiful monument was unveiled on the shore of the lake at Ile a la Crosse close to the high school.

The memorial was the result of fund-raising by the Sakitawak Elders Council who felt that there was a need to mark that sorry chapter in the history of the Métis of northwest Saskatchewan who had attended the Convent and boarding school in their village.

1860 was one of the oldest in western Canada.

I was invited to attend as both the President of the Métis National Council and a former student who attended that institution for 10 years. This date coincided with my last day of my 18-year presidency of the MNC.

In my remarks, I thanked the Sakitawak Elders for undertaking this initiative and as a former student that this meant more to me than anything the federal government may do in the future in taking responsibility to deal with us, as it came from our own people.

*"This meant more to me than anything the federal government may do in the future in taking responsibility to deal with us, as it came from our own people."*

**Clem Chartier**

As the federal government deemed it to be a religious run and sponsored institution, that residential school did not qualify for inclusion in the 2006 Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement and hence was not covered by the Prime Minister's 2008 apology. Further, it was therefore not included in the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and its recommendations. All of this, in spite of the fact that this residential school established in





## Sister Sara Riel - Early Resident of Île à la Crosse Mission

by Lorna Ledoux

Sara Riel, sister of Louis Riel, Métis Grey Nun and missionary, cultural liaison, teacher, founder of female Catholic lay organization was born 11 October 1848 in St. Boniface, MB and died 27 December 1883 in Île-à-la-Crosse, SK. Sara strove to empower Métis people and women through English-language and Catholic studies. She was a valuable mediator between conflicting cultures in the early Red River Colony due to her education and multilingual abilities. A charitable organization established by the Grey Nuns of Manitoba bears her name.

Sara was the oldest daughter of 11 children in a Catholic Métis family. Her brother Louis, future Métis leader, was the eldest brother.

Sara attended boarding school in the Red River Colony, which bordered present-day Manitoba and North Dakota. She was educated in the Catholic doctrine and cultural traditions of a European finishing school. Sara was talented in the fine arts. She spoke English, French, Cree and Michif.

When Sara's father died in 1864, the family had no crops and faced drought and famine. She remained in school and her youngest siblings withdrew. Despite discrimination against Métis workers, her older siblings found wage labour. Sara joined the Grey Nuns in 1865, an order with a long tradition of accepting people of diverse classes and cultural background

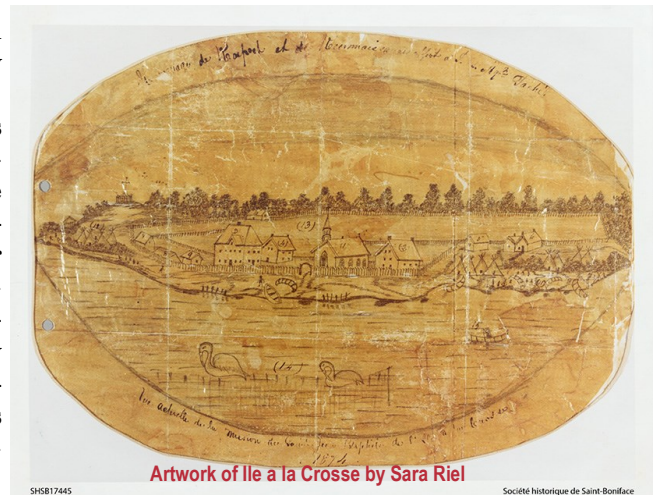
Sara became a Grey Nun in

1868. She started teaching at the Grey Nuns' day school in St. Norbert. The nuns moved her to three separate parishes over the next few years, worrying that her brother Louis' resistance activities against the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and Anglo-Protestant authorities might make her a target.

In 1871, Sara joined the Grey Nuns' mission at Île-à-la-Crosse in northern Saskatchewan, home to an isolated HBC trading post. Here, Riel spent long hours teaching at the school, tending to hospital patients, working on the farm and in the gardens and preparing meals. The school, officially recognized as a boarding school in 1897, later operated as a residential school.

Sara was the only English-speaking missionary at Île-à-la-Crosse. She served as a liaison between the mission, the HBC, Métis workers and the Dene and Cree peoples. She introduced the first English classes at Île-à-la-Crosse, believing that these language skills would help Métis students enhance their status and opportunities. But Métis who resented the HBC's power, felt that she was forcing English on their children. She stopped teaching the unpopular language when they demanded the school's closure over this,

Sara was godmother to several Île-à-la-Crosse children between 1876 and 1880. She tried to fund an orphanage, using benefits



Artwork of Île à la Crosse by Sara Riel

Société historique de Saint-Boniface

that she had received as a Métis person under the *Manitoba Act*. Because Grey Nuns could not own property, the Grey Nuns' Council decided that her struggling Métis relatives needed the money more than they did. The orphanage was never built. Alternatively, Sara created a lay organization for female students and elders who had worked as translators, teachers and cultural liaisons for Catholic missions.

*Sara's Catholic superior, Sister Agnes, wrote to Riel's mother, Julie Lagimodière: "[P]eople from everywhere came to pray by her body...She used to say 'Show them love and they will do the same in return.'"*

Sara died of tuberculosis at the age of 35 on 27 December 1883 at Île-à-la-Crosse. Her funeral was well attended by HBC leaders, Grey Nuns, Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Red River, Métis workers and students and Dene and Cree people.

Information for this story comes from:

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/sara-riel>

# Cuthbert Grant - Leader of Métis Forces at Seven Oaks

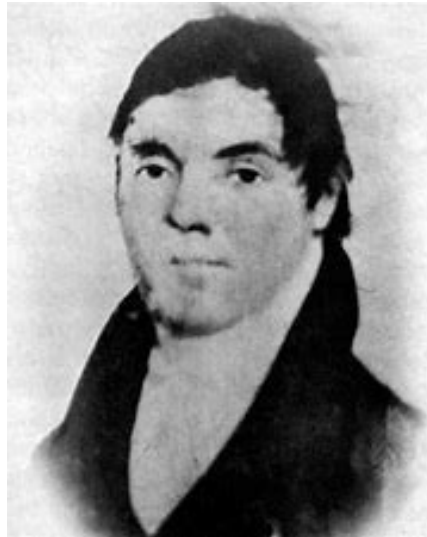
by Lorna Ledoux

## Autumn Buffalo Hunt Important for Red River Métis

The autumn hunt for Red River Métis started in September and ended in late October or early November. About half of the pemmican and dried meat prepared by the Métis families was kept for their winter provision and the rest sold to the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Garry. The hunters also brought home some fresh meat, preserved by the cold. The Autumn hunt was smaller than the summer hunt as many of the hunters, the *hivernants* or winterers, who had taken part of the summer hunt left the settlements to pass the winter on the Prairies with their families in places like the Qu'Appelle Valley and Southwestern Saskatchewan to trap and hunt. Because early fall was also the harvest season, more family members were needed to remain at home to tend to the farms.

Some of the products of these hunts, especially prime buffalo robes taken from November to February, also found their way to the American fur trading companies across the border and exchanged for dry goods such as sugar, tea and ammunition. This trade would eventually lead to the Sayer Trial of 1849.

Information for this story comes from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9tis\\_buffalo\\_hunting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9tis_buffalo_hunting)



Many believe that the Battle of Seven Oaks was one of the most important events in the formation of Métis identity. Cuthbert Grant, led the Métis to victory at Seven Oaks in 1816 and founded the Métis community Grantown (later St. François Xavier), Manitoba, in 1824. Cuthbert Grant is recognized as a founder of the Métis nation. Grant was born to Margaret Utinawasis, a Métis woman, and to a father of Scottish descent, also called Cuthbert Grant who was a prominent fur trader in the North West Company (NWC). The younger Grant spent his early childhood in different NWC fur-trading posts along the Assiniboine River. When Grant Sr. died in 1799, he left money in his will to cover the education of his sons, Cuthbert and James. William McGillivray, the NWC's Montreal agent, was named their guardian.

McGillivray took Grant, 8 years old to Montreal in 1801 where he was baptized in the Scottish Presbyterian Church. While his brother went to school in Scotland, Cuthbert was educated in Montreal under McGillivray's super-

vision.

Grant began working for the NWC's Montreal offices around 1810. By 1812, he became clerk to the Upper Red River department and was posted to Fort Espérance in Saskatchewan. During this time, the NWC and Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) were fighting for monopoly over the fur trade in Canada. Tensions were heightened when HBC director Lord Selkirk, created a settlement in the Red River valley along the routes where the NWC transported furs and pemmican.

In 1814, colony governor Miles Macdonnell, upset Métis and NWC traders by no longer allowing them to export bison near the settlement or access Red River pemmican. To gain the Métis as allies in their fight against the HBC, the NWC appointed Grant the captain general of the Métis.

On June 7 1815, the Métis led by Grant, attacked the Selkirk settlers. This and similar activities among other Métis groups caused the abandonment of the colony in June. Tensions between the HBC and NWC were high and fur trade disputes escalated, becoming known as the "pemmican wars", which ended with the Battle of Seven Oaks or *la Victoire de la Grenouillère* on June 19 1816.

The Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816 started when Cuthbert Grant led about 60 Métis and First Nations men west across Frog Plain north of the Red River settlement to deliver pemmican to the NWC canoe brigades on Lake Winnipeg.

# Cuthbert Grant - Leader of Métis Forces at Seven Oaks

by Lorna Ledoux

HBC Governor Robert Semple and his men confronted Grant's group. Gunfire and hand-to-hand combat broke out resulting in Semple and 20 of his men dying, and on the Métis side, one died and one man was wounded. For the events at Seven Oaks, the HBC implicated Grant in the murder of one of their officers in August 1816. Grant surrendered himself in 1817 and faced charges in Mon-

River. To this end, in July 1823, the HBC appointed Grant as clerk at Fort Garry and made him a special constable. However Grant resigned the following year and accepted a land grant on White Horse Plain, where he started farming. He founded a small settlement, known as Grantown, now St. Francois Xavier, about 29 kilometres west of Winnipeg. Eighty to 100 Métis families joined Grant.

Grant remained loyal to the HBC, making him unpopular with the Métis. In 1849 a younger generation of Métis nationalists defied his efforts to uphold the HBC monopoly at the Sayer trial ending his career as the warden of Assiniboia.

Jean Louis Riel, father of the renowned Louis Riel, supplanted Grant's power and prestige among the Métis by the 1850s. Riel Sr. was part of a new generation of younger radical French-speaking men who took leadership away from Scottish Métis such as Grant.

Cuthbert Grant helped to ignite the concept of a Métis nation in the minds of the Métis. This newfound sense of identity played an essential part in the Red River Resistance of 1869/70 and the North-West Resistance of 1885.

Grant is still widely commemorated and celebrated in the Métis community and greater society. The Government of Canada recognized him in 1972, as a National Historic Person. The Manitoba Métis Federation proclaimed 2016, which marked the 200th anniversary of the Seven Oaks conflict, as "the year of Cuthbert Grant Jr." In addition, the St. James Assiniboia Pioneer Association hosts Cuthbert Grant Day every July.

Information for this story comes from: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/cuthbert-grant>



Image from: <http://flintlockandtomahawk.blogspot.com/2010/06/battle-of-seven-oaks-1816.html>

trial. Grant was cleared of all indictments and he returned to the West.

With the 1821 merger the competition between the NWC and HBC came to a close, as they became one company under the HBC name. In an effort to curtail outside trade by Métis, the HBC attempted to befriend Cuthbert Grant to help stabilize and control Métis in the Red

In 1828, to prevent the illegal trading of furs, the HBC appointed Grant as "warden of the plains". Seven years later, he was appointed as justice of the peace for Assiniboia's fourth district. He joined the Council of Assiniboia in 1839 and became one of Assiniboia's two sheriffs.

During the fur free trade struggles of the 1840s, Cuthbert



## Manitoba Métis Federation Welcomes Citizens With Métis Ties to Historic Manitoba Métis Community

To be a member, or Citizen, of the Manitoba Metis Federation, you only have to demonstrate a historical connection and ancestry with the Manitoba Métis Community. To do this, your application and genealogy must show you were born in, lived as a child in, or currently lives in, a place represented by a MMF Region and Local, or you have direct ancestral connection to a place represented by a MMF Region and Local.

If you do not live in Manitoba, you will first need to [download the Citizenship/Harvester Application](#).

As part of the application process, you must:

1. **Self-identify as Métis:** The application for MMF Citizenship Identification card provides an objective and verifiable way of self-identifying as a Métis. The application process, and the subsequent issuance of cards, protect our Métis rights by preventing non-Métis from wrongly claiming and abusing our self-government and harvesting rights;
2. **Show an ancestral connection to the Historic Métis Community:** In order to objectively verify the ancestral connection to the Historic Métis Nation, applicants in the MMF must submit a copy of their own Métis genealogy, or a family member's Métis genealogy, and the required supporting evidentiary documents;
3. **Be accepted by the contemporary Manitoba Métis Community:** An objectively verifiable means of showing acceptance by Métis Nation's Manitoba Métis Community is to have the MMF, as its duly elected self-government representative, issue you an MMF Citizenship card through the application process.

In order to meet this "objectively verifiable process", the [Citizenship/Harvester Application](#) contains the required application forms.

Once you have filled out the application, submit your application to the Regional Office responsible for the Region and Local you are most connected to. To help you identify the Region and Local that you are most connected to, you may contact the MMF at the number below.

Please be sure to mail your completed application and processing fee to the Region you have identified.

Should you have questions or concerns, please contact your Regional Office, or the Central Registry Office (CRO) at MMF Home Office at (204) 586-8474

## Editorial

On September 28, 2021 the Manitoba Metis Federation announced that it was withdrawing its membership in the Métis National Council. Over the past decade, the direction that some Governing Members (provincial Presidents) were taking within the MNC to embrace non-Métis Nation citizens was simmering under the surface, and which fully emerged about 5 years ago when the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) and the Ontario government declared six new Metis communities within the province of Ontario, and boiled over this year in light of the support of the MNO by the Presidents of the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan (MNS) and Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA).

Under the pretense of being recognized Métis governments based on the June 2019 self-government process agreements entered into with Minister Bennett, the MNS, MNA and MNO formed the Tri-Council setting the stage for the departure from the Métis Nation-only movement established in March 1983 with the formation of the Métis National Council (MNC).

This effectively embraced all of the non-Métis Nation citizens registered with the MNO, flying in the face of the MNC General Assembly's suspending the MNO in November 2018 and placing it on a one year probation (grace period) to allow it time to bring its membership in line with the definition of Métis adopted the MNC General Assembly in 2002.

Coupled with this, both the MNA and MNS have confirmed that their organizations are voluntary bodies composed of Métis who wish to apply for membership. The MNA in legal action calling into question some of its practices informed the courts that they are organizations composed of members who wish to join, and that those who do not wish to join can form their own organizations. The MNA has also made it clear that even if Métis don't join the MNA that does not mean they do not have s.35 rights under Canada's Constitution. In *Chartier v. MNS* the court in early May 2021 upheld the right of the MNS to strip the democratic right of the Métis within Saskatchewan to vote in its

May 2021 election unless they joined as members. The court further stated that the MNS was not a government, and did not have any right of self-government through the June 2019 agreement signed with the federal minister. Thus, after declaring our inherent right of self-government under a new constitution in December 1993, the MNS has reverted to being a voluntary membership organization which now only provides services to its registered members.

With the MNC now a pan-Aboriginal organization, the decision of the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) President, Cabinet and Assembly to withdraw must be applauded, as that government has made a difficult decision, but sound decision and will remain the foundation of the Métis Nation in defending its history, citizenship, integrity and geographic homeland.

Continued on next page ...

...continued from previous page

The signing of the July 2021 Self-government Agreement with the federal government, approved by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, heralds in a new era for the Métis Nation on our path to decolonization. While the Presidents of the MNS and MNA cry foul and are challenging that Agreement (because theirs' are too weak), the Manitoba Métis government has pledged to work with all the descendants of the Red River Métis, as well as those in the rest of the homeland who may not have direct kinship connections, but were connected in other ways, such as through the economy of the Métis and its related activities.

Prior to 1870, the Métis Nation was not geographically part of Canada, but with the negotiations led by President Louis Riel, the first province to imprint itself on our homeland was the newly created province of Manitoba which was originally mainly populated by our people. In

1905 the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were created and with the expansion of the borders of Ontario and Manitoba our homeland was dismembered by provincial/territorial borders. Over the past 100 years, due to the federal governments' abdication of relationship with the Métis Nation after the failed scrip system and the failed implementation of s.31 of the Manitoba Act, 1870, citizens of the Métis Nation continued organizing at the community level and eventually at the provincial level. There was no other choice, until national Aboriginal organizations were established. The first one for the Métis of western Canada was the Native Council of Canada (now Congress of Aboriginal Peoples – CAP), and in March 1983 the Métis National Council.

Unfortunately, both of those national initiatives have failed us, being or becoming pan-Aboriginal organizations. As part of the decolonization process, as a people, as a nation, the Métis in what is now western Canada must look to the fu-

ture as one people, united under one national government, with a national registry of Métis Nation citizens. Provincial boundaries can play no role in preventing this national unity from taking place, no more than such boundaries can divide our culture, languages, histories, kinship ties and sense of belonging.

In his final comments on September 29, 2021 at the MNC GA in Saskatoon, President Chartier stated that he was leaving the Presidency of the MNC feeling secure and certain that the integrity, citizenship and homeland of the Métis Nation would be safeguarded. For those who may not have appreciated what he meant, it was a reference to the letter received from MMF President David Chartrand where he pledged that the MMF will pursue the protection of the Métis Nation through a new governance regime which will truly reflect the historic Métis Nation, both nationally and internationally.

**To contribute to this publication:**  
**Editor - Métis Nationalist Voice**  
**metisnationalists@gmail.com**



*We are on the web at:*

[www.metisnationalists.ca](http://www.metisnationalists.ca)