



January 29, 2020

For more information, please contact:
Cindy W. Oxley, Composer/Lyricist/Artistic Director
(780) 966-7464 [cell] | therealmusicalmania@gmail.com
musicalmania.org

2020 a landmark year for made-in-Alberta Louis Riel production

St. Albert, Alberta — 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Red River Rebellion *and* the Thomas Scott affair, two important events in the history of Canada depicted in the musical production *Hey, Riel!* by St. Albert-based composer, lyricist and artistic director **C.W. Oxley**, now in its 20th anniversary year. To celebrate, two spring matinees are being staged in Alberta by Oxley's production company *Musicalmania!* at the Jubilee Auditoriums in Edmonton and Calgary, and cast and crew are already busy preparing!

"I am thrilled to be working with another talented and devoted team on remounting *Hey, Riel!* and would like to express profound thanks to past and current cast and crew for their dedication to the ongoing development and success of this production," says Cindy W. Oxley, the show's composer and artistic director. "With past and present Indigenous issues coming to light even more than ever, and the 150th anniversary of the Red River Rebellion in Manitoba, we feel that 2020 is a particularly poignant year for this production."

Acclaimed by critics and educators, *Hey, Riel!* was first staged as *Louis David Riel-The Dramatic Musical* at the Francis Winspear Centre in Edmonton in 2000 and has undergone a number of transformations over the years. In addition to successful runs at the Edmonton Fringe Festival in 2011, *Hey, Riel!* has been shown at The Citadel Theatre, The Jubilee Auditoriums in Edmonton and Calgary, The University of Calgary, Métis communities all over Alberta (including Peavine, Pincher Creek, Bonnyville and Frog Lake), and various churches and schools. Most recently, it was performed at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium in Calgary and at the Community Hall in Pincher Creek in 2019.

Louis David Riel (October 22, 1844 – November 16, 1885) was a Canadian politician, a founder of Manitoba, and a political leader of the Métis who fought to maintain Métis rights and culture as Canada expanded. Prior to writing *Hey, Riel!*, Oxley—who holds a B.A. (Music, French, Religion), and began Post-Graduate Studies at the University of Alberta—had been writing dramatic music pieces and songs for years. "Couple that with an interest for passionate historical figures... my husband suggested I write a production about Louis Riel and his idea struck me like a bolt of lightning!"

According to Oxley, "the show has been transforming since its concert-style debut at the Winspear almost 20 years ago. There have been many Directors who have put their own touch on the staging, each bringing their ideas and uniqueness to the show." **Julien Constantin**, a leading actor in all of Musicalmania!'s shows, is now the company's ongoing Director, as well as Light and Set Designer for *Hey, Riel!*

“Julien and I are always looking to make the show more exciting by experimenting with the score and the staging— it definitely keeps everyone on their toes!” laughs Oxley. This will be the second year that Constantin—who played Riel’s nemesis, Thomas Scott for the better part of the shows for 18 years—is further exercising his acting and vocal flexibility by playing the role of Louis Riel.

Building on original costumes designed by Bill Stewart, Costume Mistress **Meghan Dunlop** has her hands full with the job of seeing that casts from 12-30 members are properly fit with spectacular and authentic costuming. “All this while lining up the props *and* being in the cast herself!” Oxley exclaims.

Like Dunlop and Constantin, most cast members are long-time company members (a.k.a. “Musicalmaniacs”), with a few new recruits for every performance. Oxley says, “‘core’ company members can, at the drop of a hat, step in and cover each other’s parts if someone is absent from a rehearsal or show.”

Rehearsals for the April productions began January 23. “Given that most of the cast has performed in this production many times, and all members are required to hone their songs with lots of practice at home,” says Oxley, “our time together is spent primarily doing run-throughs on Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons right up to showtime. Private appointments with Musical Director **Christine Davage** to “tweak” solos, duets, and tricky areas, also take place.” As others, Davage does double duty by playing “Mrs. Riel”.

Guest Métis jig dancers and fiddlers are incorporated into ***Hey, Riel!***’s upbeat “Inn Scene”, continuing on a successful initiative started in 2019. Métis artists highlighting their artistry (such as beading, jewellery, precious gems, natural healing products) will be available to meet with the audience in the lobby of both Auditoriums on performance days.

The Edmonton and Calgary matinees are especially applicable to school groups in local and area districts. The Alberta Curriculum stipulates that Louis Riel history is covered in Grades 7 and 8. In Manitoba, students as early as Grade 4 are taught about the Métis leader whose actions resonate even today. Teachers who book tickets will receive pre- and post-show activity guides by email for use in the classroom.

According to **Pierre Rousseau**, full-time lecturer at Faculté St-Jean at the University of Alberta and principal at St. Albert’s Sir George Simpson School from 2008 to 2019, “In the past few years, all Grade 7 students from Sir George Simpson had the privilege to attend Cindy Oxley’s *Hey, Riel!* musical production.... I felt that the perspective brought by Cindy Oxley and Julien Constantin was exceptional and carefully studied. I sincerely believe it has the potential to enhance the students’ knowledge and appreciation of this very important part of our own history.”

Hey, Riel! kicks off at the **Northern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium** in Edmonton on Monday, April 6, from 12:30-2:00 pm (no intermission). The musical will be held at the same time the next day in Calgary, April 7, at the **Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium**. Tickets are \$15 per person for both shows and can be booked by contacting Musicalmania! by email at therealmusicalmania@gmail.com, or by calling (780) 460-2937.

Pour convenir d'une entrevue en français, veuillez contacter:

Julien Constantin

directeur, scénographe, concepteur lumière, acteur ("Louis Riel")

(780) 964-3169 [cell.] | julienconstantin@hotmail.com

About Musicalmania!

In 1996, with support from family, students, their parents, and professionals, **Musicalmania! Production Company** was formed, and its first production was staged. This performing troupe has been involved in hundreds of professional and charitable events province-wide, presenting revue concerts as well as C.W. Oxley's full-length historical musicals, including: *Notre Dame of Paris*, *Hey, Riel!*, *Che*, *St. Joan and Me*, *My Cleopatra*, and *Days of the Klondike*.

Hey, Riel! Synopsis

Louis Riel is thought by many to be the Father of Canadian Confederation. Others believe him to be a black spot on Canada's past. This poignant part of Canadian history comes to life through the magical medium of live musical theatre. Riel is haunted by the ghost of his nemesis, Thomas Scott, while fighting for the rights of the Métis people and having his faith tested by severe personal turmoil.

Act 1 (1864-1874)

Riel, in the seminary in Montreal, sees visions of what is to come. He finds out his father has died. He heads back to Manitoba, where he finds out his home land is in turmoil.

Act 2 (1884)

Riel has settled in Montana, is a school teacher, married, and the father of two children. He quickly gets word that the land issues have flared up again in Manitoba. The ghost of Thomas Scott is still with him...

Additional Quotes

"Your musical makes me want to be a better leader."

— **Ken Noskey**, Council Chairman, Peavine Métis Settlement, November 2017

"Musicalmania Productions have created a fantastic, must see rendition of a very pivotal point in Canadian history. I marvel at the degree of professionalism, stage presence, and the production of the *Hey, Riel!* performance. The entire cast and crew have my utmost admiration. This is a production not to be missed and highly recommended for all age groups."

— **Bruce Joudrey**, Principal, Bishop Routhier School, Peavine Métis Settlement, January 2020

"Yesterday, my cast had the opportunity to perform for the Peavine Settlement. I have NEVER felt more welcomed- they had a billboard for us inviting all of the community to join. We were late due to roads and they still insisted that we eat before performing, and they had prepared

a fantastic meal for us. Their community elders were there to watch, and the police even stopped by to watch as well. I felt so honoured to be there, performing a musical version of a part of history that is so very important to the Métis people and to Canada!"

— **Taylor Cox**, *Hey, Riel!* cast member, November 2017

Available for comment:

— **Ken Noskey**, Council Chairman, Peavine Métis Settlement
ken.noskey@peavinemetis.com | (780) 523-0701

Ken is currently in his 28th year as an elected official. He was president of the Métis Settlements General Council for nine years, has served on the Council of the Peavine Métis Settlement for 19 years and was re-elected for another term in October 2017. He has presented to both the Senate and the Royal Aboriginal Commission on Aboriginal governance and twice travelled abroad with the federal government to share the Canadian experience of Aboriginal governance with Indigenous people in Argentina and Thailand. He represented the Peavine Métis Settlement as a member of the Lesser Slave Lake Economic Alliance and the High Prairie Chamber of Commerce. Ken's passion is to see the North's human resources developed to maximize the potential of the region's natural resources and contribute to building stronger communities across the North. With previous experience in the forestry and oil industries, he is the current owner/operator of a trucking and skid steer services company and raises cattle. He is also on the organizing committee of the [Métis Miler](#) events that raise money for people who need to travel away from home for medical treatments. Ken is married with five children and 12 grandchildren. Ken is an ordained member of the clergy and a long-distance runner.

[Source: <https://nadc.ca/our-council/pictures-and-bios/ken-noskey/>]

— **Bruce Joudrey**, Principal, Bishop Routhier School, Peavine Métis Settlement, High Prairie
bruce.joudrey@nsd61.ca | (780) 523-2216

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY: "The school is dedicated to the belief that all children can and will learn. It is also understood that children learn at different rates and have different needs. This school will work to supply the children with every learning opportunity that is possible and to assist each individual student. The goal of this school is to develop independent, self-reliant, life-long learners."

— **Pierre Rousseau**, Lecturer, Faculté St-Jean, University of Alberta, January 2020
pierre.rousseau@ualberta.ca | (780) 460-9429

While Pierre Rousseau was Principal (2008-2019), Sir George Simpson School in St. Albert was represented at the Métis flag declaration, in St. Albert, every November. Students also participated actively in the local Healing Garden Opening Ceremony, as well as the City's Reconciliation Project on the Truth and Reconciliation [calls to action](#). Rousseau implemented the drum circle for the school's young First Nation and Métis students, as well as Cree language workshops for students and staff. The school was also instrumental in hosting the Aboriginal Day Celebration for the entire school district. Rousseau remains an active member of the St. Albert Public Schools Wisdom and Guidance Council.

Cast and Crew Biographies

ATTACHED; DOCUMENT AND PHOTOGRAPHS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD
AT musicalmania.org/media-centre

Resources

ALBERTA CURRICULUM GUIDE

https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/aeChapter/pdf/Alberta_Louis_Riel%20_Teacher_Guide.pdf

MANITOBA CURRICULUM GUIDE

<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/riel/outcomes.html>