

Louis Riel – Hero or Traitor?

Louis Riel is a hero to many, a visionary, the fiery leader of a downtrodden people. To others he is a madman, a traitor or a misguided zealot.

Riel was born in the Red River Colony of what is now Manitoba, the son of a prominent Métis leader and a French Canadian mother. He was educated as a lawyer in Montréal and returned to his home just as Canada was preparing to buy the vast territory called Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company. Since the Red River Colony (where the Red and Assiniboine Rivers meet) was part of Rupert's Land, the Métis people feared they would lose control of their land rights and culture.

The Métis are the descendants of French Canadian *coureur de bois* and voyagers and First Nation mothers. They developed a unique Métis culture based on the merging of First Nation and French Canadian ways of life. The Métis speak *michif* – a mix of *French, English, Cree* and *Ojibwe*. The Métis saw their way of life threatened by the arrival of English-speaking, protestant settlers from Ontario during the negotiations to buy Rupert's Land.

Riel and others attempted to stop the Canadian representatives from entering the colony. They formed a provisional government to negotiate with Canada. The Canadian representatives wanted to resurvey the settlement's farms, which were laid out like the seigneurial system, and change them to square lots like the rest of Canada. The Canadian government bought and treated Rupert's Land as if no one lived there. In order to protect their land rights, the Métis rebels seized Upper Fort Garry, the main HBC trading post, and planned to hold the fort until the Canadian government agreed to negotiate entry of the colony into Confederation.

Though there was no bloodshed in the Rebellion, the provisional government and Riel executed one prisoner named Thomas Scott, a protestant from Ontario who opposed the rebels. People in Ontario and the Canadian government were outraged by the execution and Riel was forced to flee the country. He spent time in Quebec, New England and the American Midwest. He was later twice elected a member of parliament by the new province of Manitoba, but was never able to take his seat in the Canadian government.

After Riel fled, the Canadian government recognized the rights of the people living in Red River and negotiations took place in Ottawa to create the new, very small, province of Manitoba through the Manitoba Act. In the Act, the Métis were guaranteed land, using scrip (which were basically coupons for land, but not very good land) and cultural rights. However, the Canadian government didn't always follow through on these promises and many Métis moved farther west to get better land and maintain their culture.

Riel was asked back to Canada by some Métis people in Saskatchewan to help them in their struggle with the Canadian government. Like back in Red River, the Métis feared that their land would be taken by Canada. Riel wrote petitions and letters to Ottawa. Then in 1885 the Métis lost patience and proclaimed a provisional government of their own. On March 26th, 300 Métis (led by Riel) clashed with 100 North West Mounted Police and volunteers. This fight created the Northwest Rebellion.

The Canadian government responded quickly by sending 8000 troops to put down the uprising. The armies met in May at Batoche and the Métis were defeated. Riel surrendered and was executed by the Canadian government, a move that was very unpopular with Métis people.

***The Red River Rebellion and Louis Riel
Comic Strip Assignment***

You are an artist and the Canadian Government has asked you to create a comic representing Metis culture and their view of Louis Riel and the Red River Rebellion.

After exploring the unique identity of the Metis in Canada, your job is to understand the Red River Rebellion and Louis Riel's role in the uprising.

Your task is to create a comic strip that **fully explains** the Red River Rebellion in 1869 based on the article we read. You should focus on Riel's role as leader and hero of the Metis.

You will need to first complete a plan, on the back of this sheet before getting good paper for your final copy.

Your checklist:

- Read article and find essential information
- Complete planning sheet
- Get your rough copy approved by your teacher
- Review rubric → actually read it!
- Complete final copy on sheet of paper given

Outcome	4	3	2	1
<i>Demonstrates knowledge and understanding of citizenship and identity.</i>	Comic strip shows clear evidence of historical interpretation of characters and events.	Comic strip shows partial evidence of historical interpretation of characters and events.	Comic strip shows basic evidence of historical interpretation of characters and events.	Comic strip shows little evidence of historical interpretation of characters and events.
<i>Manages and evaluates information and ideas.</i>	Illustrations are highly detailed and significantly enhance the telling of the story. Comic strip is extremely well organized and easy to read.	Illustrations are detailed and somewhat enhance the telling of the story. Comic strip is well organized and easy to read.	Illustrations are partially detailed and somewhat enhance the telling of the story. Comic strip is somewhat organized and readable.	Illustrations are limited in detail and do not enhance the telling of the story. Comic strip lacks organization and is hard to read.
<i>Explores events and issues from different points of view.</i>	Historical events and individuals are correctly portrayed and information is clear.	Historical events and individuals are portrayed correctly most of the time and information is mostly clear.	Historical events and individuals are portrayed correctly some of the time but only some of the information is clear.	Historical events and individuals are not portrayed correctly and information is incorrect.

Comments: