Louis Riel Day takes place on the anniversary of a great tragedy; the execution of Louis Riel on November 16, 1885. Riel’s only crime was that he defended the rights of his people, our people, the Métis. Although he fought for Métis rights in the west, his resistance had repercussions for Métis in Ontario as well. We were labelled traitors and for generations our culture was forced underground. We became the “forgotten people.”

Over the years, however, we began to assert ourselves and take up the mantle of Louis Riel. We founded the Métis Nation of Ontario, and with Steve Powley, we asserted our Métis rights. Everyday that we work together as MNO citizens, we are seeking the same rights that Louis Riel defended. Louis Riel’s battle did not end on November 16, 1885, because we are fighting it today. It is for that reason that Louis Riel Day, November 16, 2011, is a day that celebrates our resilience as a people, it is a day we remember what we have achieved so far, and it is a day we steel our resolve, so, Louis Riel’s dream can be a reality for our children.

Gary Lipinski,
President
Métis Nation of Ontario