Louis Riel Day commemorates the anniversary of the execution of Louis Riel on November 16, 1885. Riel made the ultimate sacrifice for defending Métis rights and although these events took place in the West, his resistance had repercussions for Métis in Ontario. We were labelled traitors and for generations our culture was forced underground. We became the “forgotten people.”

Today, we are no longer the “forgotten people” because we assert our Métis rights, and by doing so, take up the mantle of Louis Riel. It is for this reason that Louis Riel Day is a cause for celebration in our communities across the homeland. It is a day to remember our past, live our culture and reaffirm our determination that our children will inherit all the rights Louis Riel fought so bravely to protect.

Louis Riel Day is especially poignant this year because 2013 marks the tenth anniversary of R. v. Powley, the monumental Supreme Court of Canada case that affirmed the Métis right to harvest is protected under section 35 of The Constitution Act, 1982. In their decade of struggle to have their Métis rights recognized, Steve and Roddy Powley were fighting the same battle as Louis Riel.

On November 16, 2013, I encourage you to join with your community and your Nation in Louis Riel Day events. It is a day to proclaim proudly as both Louis Riel and Steve Powley did: “We are Métis.”

Marsi, Megwetch