

My Riel, My Riel
By Michael Plante

*"My people will sleep for one hundred years,
but when they awake,
it will be the artists who give them their spirit back."*
Louis Riel

The turtle scratched his way back home
along the littered terrain
his belly crimson red, his face dirtied by the mud
his tail tucked between his legs.
"I shall live to see another day" he said.
"Better days than these."
His fingers were crushed
like the dreams he had of living in peace.
"To be left alone was not much to ask" he thought.

His home had been destroyed
the land ravished, the water tainted
those he called friends were no longer present
they were scattered like seeds in the wind.
The place he called home that once flourished in abundance was now barren.

The tired turtle dug a hole in the mud
home is paradise no matter the perception.
"I shall be rested when the new day arrives" he thought.
"By the crimson skies above
into the darkness I shall not fade
in my slumber I shall dream
beyond the sight of old men.
I will be forgotten by time
my home regarded as worthless.
Blind men rule this land
and those that follow are fools."

The turtle heard a voice from the past
the captain of the Metis who was hung for his vision
spoking to him so peacefully and clearly.

*"My people will sleep for one hundred years,
but when they awake,
it will be the artists who give them their spirit back."*

The turtle closed his eyes
as battered as he was his spirit was intact.
“I shall sleep one hundred years
for that is the way of my captain”

The crimson skies broke away to black
where dreams that capture the spirit of the west
hold our trust and deliver us peace
when the days of thunder are upon us.
In days that followed rolling waves pounded the shores
the sea crested the edge of humanity
forever changing the shoreline of this new country.

The barren land discarded as waste
left to die alone and unattended
would soon dull with shades of grey
as the turtle dreamed of times to come.

When prosperity arrived at the doorstep
the colors of the world seeped into the barren
the land thought as waste now flourished
and new spirits accepted the fight.

The heartbeat of the land
began to thump like a drum
rising sound elated the spirit above.
Nature's inquiry is brought forth by animals of flight
for they too have a voice to contribute.
Singing at dawn, singing at dusk
singing praises to the Creator
for he has given life
where no life existed.

From a deep dream the turtle awoke
Riel called to him.
“Its time to praise our Creator
in celebration of unity
in songs of tradition.
We have prevailed our adversities
with the strength of our Creator,
into a richness we are led
by way of the artist”.

Pressing forward from the dirt
he broke from darkness into new light
where friends were waiting.
They embraced the turtle
kindly and gently they washed away the dirt of one hundred years,
softly singing songs of history they painted the turtle
refreshing his colors and lifting his spirit.

Into the night they danced
by the light of a fire
singing joyful songs
to our Captain Riel.

*“My Riel, my Riel
our time has arrived,
we have risen up from our sleep
the new millennium has awoken the land
we dance, we sing, we call out to the Creator
we never forgot the ways of our people,
and proudly stand with our choices.
In the eyes of the Creator
we now are as one”*