

## **Neil Gaudry, M.L.A. (1937-1999)**

By Gabriel Dufault

Neil Gaudry was Liberal MLA from St. Boniface, elected to Manitoba legislature April 25, 1988, re-elected September 11, 1990 and April 25, 1995. He died of a heart attack in February of 1999 while attending Festival du Voyageur in St. Boniface.

Neil was born in St. Laurent on September 19, 1937, the son of Véronique Chartrand and Ernest Gaudry. He attended all his schooling in his native community of St. Laurent graduating with grade XII. In October of 1962 at the St. Boniface Cathedral he married Leona Rainville and together they raised three children; Roger, Rene and Nicole.

He was mayor of Canadian-francais pavilion of Folklorama in 1983, “Voyageurs official” of festival du Voyageur 1984-85, founding President of l’accueil Colombie- a senior citizen home in Saint Boniface for four years, long time member of the Knights of Columbus. He was a life member of the Société historique de Saint-Boniface and served as District Deputy and Chairman of the board of the Saint Boniface Museum.

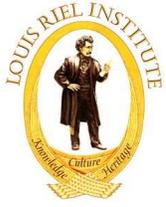
He was elected to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly for the riding of Saint Boniface on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1988, was re-elected on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September 1990 and then again on the 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1995. He served as interim Chief of the Provincial Liberals in 1998 as well as being the alternate member of the working committee for the Meech Lake Accord. He was the first MLA to deliver a speech entirely in French in the Manitoba Legislative, in 1988. He was the driving force of a bill formally recognizing Louis “David” Riel as founder of Manitoba on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1992. The preamble of his bill was as follows:

*The Metis and Canadiens-français have always considered Louis Riel as the father and founder of Manitoba especially in the darkest hours of 1885. This officially can not erase all the injustices and persecutions that we as Metis have endured but it serves to acknowledge the calm and worthy 1869-70 Red River Resistance is recognized, it also serves as an indication of our readiness to continue building a strong Manitoba and Canada on the solid foundation bequeathed to us by Louis Riel. It also indicated very clearly that the Metis Nation could be proud of its languages, of its history and traditions. Finally recognizes the unique and historical role that Louis Riel played in the creation of the Province of Manitoba and the Canadian Confederation.*

Neil Gaudry endorsed very vigorously the various private members bills introduced in the House of Commons all aimed at reversing the guilty verdict of high treason rendered Louis Riel’s trial. Recognizing as well, Louis Riel as the Father of Confederation.

Neil Gaudry died on February 18<sup>th</sup> 1999 while attending one of the events of the Festival du Voyageurs. He is buried in the St. Laurent cemetery. A bursary bearing his

name has been established at College Universitaire de Saint Boniface for Metis students.  
(Contributed by Gabriel Dufault.)



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