

Sister Sara Riel. (1848-1883)

Sara was born on October 11, 1848, in St. Boniface, the daughter of Jean-Louis Riel (b. 1817) and Julie Lagimodière. She was the sister of Métis leader Louis Riel, the fourth of eleven children (nine of whom lived to adulthood). Sara Riel was educated at the Sisters of Charity's (Grey Nuns') boarding school in St. Boniface. She entered the congregation's noviciate in September 1865, and became the first Métis Grey Nun from Red River in March 1868. Sara and Louis were known to have a close relationship and to share religious beliefs. Because she was proficient in English, French, Cree, and Michif, Sara had the requisite skills to teach in the congregation's day and boarding schools at St. Norbert, St. Vital, Francis-Xavier, and Île-à-la-Crosse.

Sara Riel joined the Grey Nuns in the latter 1860s; she relocated in June 1871 to Ile-à-la-Crosse, her father's birthplace and the family's ancestral home, and the site of a major missionary effort. She served in the community's mission, including its school and hospital. Between 1876 and 1880 she became godmother to several of the community's children. Earlier, in 1872, Sara Riel had suffered from a severe case of pneumonia and was believed to be dying. After being given the Last Sacrament, she experienced a seemingly miraculous full recovery, and later obtained permission to change her name to Sister Marguerite-Marie, in honour of the saint who had been invoked in prayers. Throughout her life, Sara Riel and her brother corresponded; letters remain which speak of their relationship and of her time spent at Ile-à-la-Crosse. She died of tuberculosis on December 27, 1883. (Cheryl Troupe, *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*, http://esask.uregina.ca/entry/riel_sara_1848-83.html)

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