

GABRIEL DUMONT

Born at St. Boniface in 1837, Gabriel Dumont is a name known by all as the military leader of the Metis in the Rebellion of 1885. Dumont quickly gained status among the Metis as an organizer and leader.

At the age of 25, he was elected leader of the Saskatchewan hunt, the annual buffalo hunt of the Metis at the time. This was unusual for a man so young.

By 1868 he had settled near St. Laurent on the South Saskatchewan. When the Metis uprising of 1870 occurred at Fort Garry, Dumont was among those Metis of St. Laurent who rushed back to Fort Garry to lend their support. He returned to Batoche and by 1872 was operating a commercial ferry across the South Saskatchewan River.

In 1873 he was elected President of the Metis Council for the Settlement of the St. Laurent and area, a post which he also retained the following year.

It was at this time that Dumont became directly involved in attempting to deal with the special grievances the Metis people had with the Dominion government.

By 1884 almost all hope Dumont had, that he might solve these problems was gone and he was chosen in the company of three others, to approach Louis Riel and convince Riel to return to Canada to help the cause.

By late February 1885 that hope, too, was gone. Dumont, Riel, and other leading Metis were becoming increasingly militant.

On the 19th of March, Hudson Bay Chief Factor Lawrence Clarke, on his way through the Metis settlements announced that he had seen "a force of eighty 'Mounties', on the way to arrest Dumont and Riel." Faced with this supposed threat, Dumont and the rest of the Metis quickly mobilized. War was inevitable.

The end for Dumont and his people came on May 12, 1885 at Batoche. Riel surrendered and Dumont went into hiding. On May 15, 1885, Gabriel Dumont, accompanied by Michel Dunas, left for the U.S.

Eleven days later, south of the Cypress Hills, they crossed the border. Dumont spent several years in the U.S., occasionally visiting major Canadian cities. He returned for the last time in 1893, and eventually, after finally securing title for his land at Batoche, retired to a small log cabin at Bellevue where he passed away on May 10, 1906.