

**METIS DAY**

# Rare artifacts help Louis Riel come alive at Aboriginal Pavilion

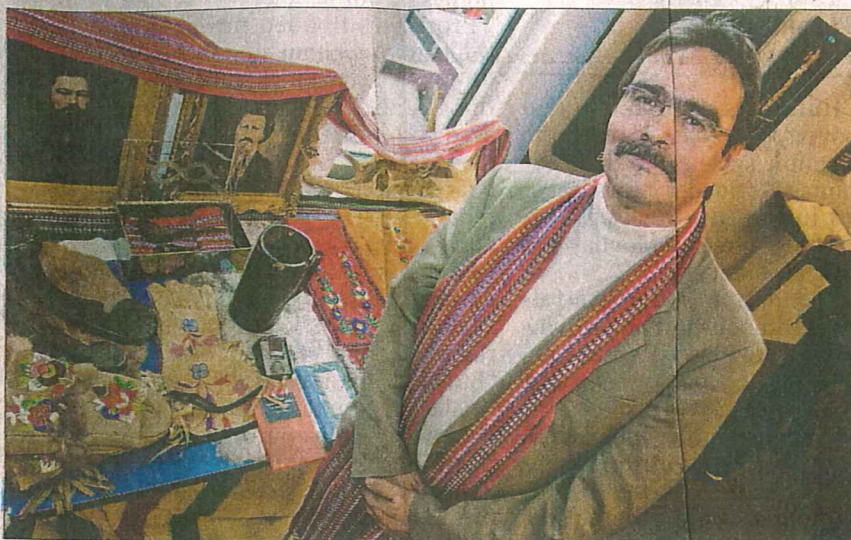
**BY KIM PEMBERTON**  
VANCOUVER SUN

Standing proudly beside Louis Riel artifacts he's been collecting for 18 years, Metis Henry Hall told visitors to the Aboriginal Pavilion Monday he considers himself the "keeper," not the owner, of what is undoubtedly the largest personal collection of Riel memorabilia in B.C., and possibly Canada.

Hall's collection includes a tiny, boot-shaped snuff box, made out of buffalo bone, with Riel's initials; two of his wooden drinking dippers; a large carved wooden cup and a buffalo-horn spoon engraved with Riel's name and 1881, the year it was made.

Also on display at the pavilion were two books of Riel's poetry, published in 1886, and two oil paintings of the Metis leader.

The artifacts were just a sampling of Hall's collection on display as part of Metis Day at the Aboriginal Pavilion, which coincidentally happened to be Louis Riel Day in Manitoba. Riel is considered the founder of the



MATT BORCK/SPECIAL TO THE VANCOUVER SUN

Henry Hall, regional director of Metis B.C. Nation, has amassed a collection of Louis Riel memorabilia, including a water jug, a buffalo-bone snuff box and oil paintings of the Metis leader. All were on show at the Aboriginal Pavilion Monday on Metis Day, also called Louis Riel Day in Manitoba.

province of Manitoba — the only province in Canada to have an officially proclaimed Louis Riel Day.

During the 2010 Winter Olympics,

the Four Host First Nations' main site, the Aboriginal Pavilion at Georgia and Hamilton streets, will be holding different theme days, such as Monday's Metis Day, and Cree Day, which happens today.

"I just want to make sure I can preserve these artifacts for the future," said Hall.

"One of the names given to the Metis is the forgotten people. That's horrendous. We are the race of Canada. We were created here and we are still here. For the rest of my breathing days, I'll tell people we are here."

Hall, who is also a regional director of the Metis B.C. Nation, said the Olympics is giving the 600,000-strong Metis across the country, including 60,000 in B.C., an opportunity to explain to the world who they are. He explained that Metis means people of mixed ancestry — Europeans and first nations.

ABO

# Coca-Cola art bottle celebrates Riel rebellion

Artist says work brings back spirit of the Metis people

BY KEVIN GRIFFIN  
VANCOUVER SUN

Louis Riel's armed resistance to the fledgling Canadian government and the subsequent rebirth of the Metis nation were celebrated Monday in the final aboriginal art bottle design for Coca-Cola.

Called *The Awakening*, the two-metre tall Coke bottle, designed by artist Lisa Shepherd, is decorated with traditional Metis clothing and material, including a beaver fur cap, a multi-coloured sash and floral beadwork.

The bottle is wrapped in a multi-coloured Hudson's Bay blanket, which the Metis traditionally turned into a coat or a capote. It's also wrapped with photographs of Shepherd's Metis ancestors, including her great-uncle George Alexander Campion who was killed fighting as a soldier in Italy during the Second World War. A mountain in the Rockies is named after him.

Shepherd said she named the artwork *The Awakening* "because Louis Riel was quoted as saying, 'My people will sleep for 100 years and when they awaken, it will be the artists who will give them their spirit back.'"

"So I really felt that here we are in 2010 and the Olympics are here and for the first time ever indigenous people are being asked to be partners of a worldwide event like this," said Shepherd, who grew up on the Prairies in Spruce Grove, Alta. "It is 125 years after the 1885 resistance. This is a time to celebrate."

Resistance by the Metis to the authority of the new Canadian government in the late 19th century led to the Northwest Rebellion. Riel was eventually arrested, tried and executed for treason. To the Metis, however, he's considered a Father of Confederation.

Shepherd's bottle is the final design in the national program that saw Coca-Cola select 15 first nations, Inuit and Metis artists from across the country. All the bottles are being auctioned through the iCoke.ca and eBay.ca/charity until Thursday, Feb. 25. Proceeds will help support the Vancouver



Metis artist Lisa Shepherd with her son, Gabriel, and the Coca-Cola bottle to be auctioned off online.

2010 Aboriginal Youth Legacy Fund. Tewanee Joseph, chief executive officer of the Four Host First Nations, started off the bidding for the bottles by putting in an offer of \$2,500 for *The Awakening* at the news conference Monday in the B.C. Pavilion on the fourth floor of the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Coca-Cola has been associated with the Olympics since 1928, which makes the multinational company its longest continuous corporate supporter. The company sponsors national Olympic committees in more than 200 countries.

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The late Jack Poole, who is credited with helping bring the Olympics to Vancouver, was a Metis himself.

Hall said the Metis on hand Monday to demonstrate their culture through songs and dance would have been honoured to show Poole how much "the culture is coming back full strength."

He said in the late 1500s, 500 men on three ships came from France to the banks of the St. Lawrence, now Montreal, and left 60 men behind who were hired to build a fort and trade for fur. It was these men who married aboriginal women and it would take about 100 years before the Metis identity, with its own language, food, dance and song was firmly established in Canada, he said.

Riel was considered a leader of the Metis people of the Canadian Prairies. He led two resistance movements — the Red River Rebellion of 1869-1870 and the Northwest Rebellion of 1885 — against the Canadian government and its first post-Confederation prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald.

Riel would later be executed on a charge of high treason. Today he is regarded as a Canadian folk hero.

Hall also had a medal on show that he said was awarded to soldiers and farmers who fought the Metis people in 1885 with the goal of exterminating all Metis.

Bruce Dumont, president of the Metis B.C. Nation, said the Olympics have given the Metis an opportunity to raise awareness and to showcase their culture.

Various Metis groups will be performing during the Games, including the Vancouver-based Compagni Vni Dansi group with artistic director Yvonne Chartrand.

"It's not very often we have an international audience," said Chartrand. "It's important to talk about our music, our dance, our heritage. To show the vibrancy, the love, the joy of our people."

Chartrand said it was especially poignant that Metis Day fell on Louis Riel Day because he "fought for us in both resistances so we would have a voice in the world today."

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