

Global Friday Presents

Metis in the Margins?: Louis Riel, Montreal and Colonial Education

September 22, 2023

Louis Riel is one of Canada's most famous political figures. Many know him as a leader of the Metis Resistance at Red River in 1869 and again at Batoche in 1885. He was eventually executed for treason by the Canadian government. However, Riel's reputation as a "rebel" obscures his more complex role in the project of building the Canadian nation-state. This talk presents a fine-grained study of Riel's education at the Sulpician College in Montreal from 1856-1864 to illustrate some of that complexity. Archival traces show that Riel integrated well into the student body, that he was a leader, and had literary ambitions. My research in the archives of the Sulpicians revealed a manuscript of Riel's graduation speech, given as an upper-level philosophy student, that provides an opportunity to examine how this young Metis man managed colonial education. Through Riel's education in Montreal this essay illustrates some of the tensions of empire in nineteenth-century colonial British North America.



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When: Friday, September 22 from 12pm to 1:30pm

Where: 7-212 in the Agora