Louis Riel was a Metis sent east by the priests to be educated a Catholic university in Montreal. A leader of the Metis, he was later a leader of the broader society in Manitoba after British takeover; a major commercial center in Winnipeg is named for him; you see his name in lights on the skyline. He was instrumental in the agreement that made Winnipeg the westernmost Canadian city with both French and English sectors, and in retaining rights and land for the Red River Metis, in the French sector (ie east of the Red River). One province west, he led an armed uprising against British administration and, in particular, land policies. He was hanged thereafter, for his trouble.

There is a lot online and in print about Riel, the history of Winnipeg's founding, and the rebellion he led; way more than can be done justice here.

This is an intense and angry tune; a Metis anthem. It is my belief that the third part (which was repeated in the original, making the tune 40 bars) commemorates Riel's arrest, trial and, in the last two bars, the hanging. It does really well as a contra tune when drive and intensity are called for. Any medley below, below will just grab the dancers, and not let go.

Medleys:

Grey Owl 2008: Fox Family reel / Silver Street Lasses / Louis Riel

Common Ground 2011: Barn Raising Reel / Louis Riel / Sitting Bull

Also, in light of St Joseph being Patron Saint of the Metis, and Riel

having gone to his death clutching a plaster icon of St Joseph

Barn Raising Reel / Louis Riel / Reel StJoseph