

Remarks by His Honour
The Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan
One Book One Province Launch
Thursday, February 28, 2019

- Kokum Dubois
- President McCallum
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening and welcome to Government House. I am delighted to join the Saskatchewan Library Association to launch *One Book One Province*.

I want to say a special word of welcome to President Glen McCallum and representatives from Métis Nation Saskatchewan. We are honoured to have you join us tonight.

When I was installed as Lieutenant Governor last March, Métis Nation Saskatchewan presented a sash to me, and I want to take this opportunity to thank you for this gift. Thank you, as well, for your ongoing advice and partnership with my office.

Libraries have been important in my life and in the lives of my children and grandchildren. Libraries are places of learning and community; of discovery and connection; of culture and creativity. I want to thank all of the committed staff and board members who operate libraries throughout our province, for playing such a vital role in our lives.

I also want to congratulate and thank the Saskatchewan Library Association for the *One Book One Province* initiative. As people across the Saskatchewan read Lisa Bird-Wilson's "Just Pretending," we become a province-wide book club, and share discussion about Lisa's thought-provoking stories. We are also encouraged to incorporate Métis culture as we read the book.

This is an important year in Métis history. 2019 marks the 175th anniversary of the birth of Louis Riel, as well as the 150th anniversary of the start of the Red River Resistance.

In my book about my experience negotiating the treaty with the Nisga'a people of British Columbia, I comment about Louis Riel, and I'd like to share that passage with you tonight.

"There can be few tales more dramatic or compelling than the modern struggle for aboriginal rights in Canada. True, those who seek tales of individual valour or villainy will be disappointed. We have no Sitting Bulls, no Crazy Horses, no General Custers or Geronimos. The closest we can come to that kind of notoriety is Louis Riel, the visionary, Sulpician-educated Métis leader who exhausted all avenues of diplomacy before he finally, reluctantly, took up arms in defence of his culture.

That he and his Saskatchewan lieutenant, Gabriel Dumont, could cause such trouble – albeit short-lived – for the British Empire still amazes us. More telling, perhaps, that a half-caste, largely illiterate society could throw up two leaders of undoubted genius in a single generation was more than Canadian society could contemplate at the time.

And yet, Riel's struggle was in many ways the crucible of modern aboriginal land claims. From his first confident dispatches to the Canadian Government in 1869 to his final, desperate pleas in 1885, he sought not to exclude British and Canadian society from the wealth and promise of his birthright, but only to welcome settlers and newcomers in a manner that would respect the rights and traditions of his people. With very few exceptions, aboriginal society in Canada has followed his first choice ever since, seeking redress not through confrontation but through diplomacy and the law."

I am pleased that the Saskatchewan Library Association has chosen to honour Métis people through *One Book One Province*. Métis culture is rich in story-telling, song and dance, and other forms of artistic expression. It is a culture with a proud heritage, and a people of extraordinary resilience.

Lisa's stories speak to that resilience in the face of great heart break. They speak to a longing and search for identity.

Lisa, thank you for your generosity in sharing these beautiful stories in "Just Pretending." It was wonderful to have you read from your book of poetry "The Red Files" here at Government House last April, and we are very pleased to welcome you back.

We are also delighted to have Métis fiddler Tahnis Cunningham here tonight. Tahnis will be introduced more fully later in the evening, but I want to welcome you, Tahnis, and your guitarist, Ray Bell. I look forward to hearing your music and your stories.

I mentioned earlier that libraries are places of learning. Reading and learning about Métis culture is an act of reconciliation, and I thank you all for joining us tonight, and for your openness to learning about, and celebrating Métis culture and the work of Métis artists.

In closing, it is my pleasure to bring you greetings on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Queen of Canada. Thank you.