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Grant's Old Mill (left) will be the site of the ceremony creating a new branch of the clan of Cuthbert Grant (above).

Induction into clan a historic honour

Métis, European heritages mingle in event

IT'S not something you see every day. A Highland Scottish chief on a Red River cart will be piped into the Grant's Old Mill on the banks of the Assiniboine River to create a new branch of a 1,000-year-old clan this weekend.

It's a Highland ceremony with elements of Métis tradition but it dates back to ancient Celtic and Viking cultures.

Sir James Grant, known as Lord Strathspey in his role as the 33rd chief of the clan, is in Winnipeg to conduct the rites today, at the invitation of the St. James-Assiniboia Pioneer Society.

The ceremony will recognize 18th-century Métis leader Cuthbert Grant as a clan member, which means his descendants will become eligible to belong to an official sept (branch) of the Grant clan.

The Grant clan is better known for its territorial proximity to Loch Ness and its fabled sea monster than for its links to Manitoba's Métis, which makes the event singular, organizers say.

"It is hugely historic and it's the first time it's happened in Canada. We're being recognized as an official part of the Grant clan," said Alexandria Horyski, a Cuthbert Grant descendant.

Up to 1,000 people, including visiting Scots, the

Manitoba descendants of Cuthbert Grant and a branch of the Grants from Yukon, are expected to witness the rites, followed by performances by Métis entertainers.

Cuthbert Grant is remembered as a father of the Métis nation in Canadian history for pivotal roles in the development of the Red River Colony.

As a Métis captain, Grant led the North West Company forces at the massacre at Seven Oaks in 1816. Later, the Hudson's Bay Co. named him Warden of the Plains in 1828, an indication of the shifting alliances in the fur trade of the era. His task was to marshal the Métis in defence of the Red River Settlement.

Grant later became councillor, sheriff and magistrate of the District of Assiniboia.

Less well-known is Grant's childhood before he arrived in Manitoba. He spent 10 years as a schoolboy in Scotland during the era of open debate and cultural renaissance known as the Scottish Enlightenment.

The mill is located at 2777 Portage Ave. The event begins at 10 a.m.

Some of Grant's biography can be found at the St. James-Assiniboia Pioneer Society's website: <http://cuthbertgrant.ca>.