

The Métis and the Spirit of Resistance – Darren R. Préfontaine with Leah Dorion

Section Objective: In this module, the students will learn about the Métis concept of resistance, the Louis Riel exoneration issue and various aspects of the 1869-70 and 1885 Resistances.

I. The Métis and the Concept of Resistance

Métis Sacred Ground - Claude Adams

*My Grandpa came to get me
When I was just a boy
As we rode in a buggy
On his face I saw no joy*

*And this was so unusual
He always wore a smile
He told a sad, sad story
As we went mile by mile*

*"The Battle at Batoche" he said
"Is something you must hear!"
He talked on till we came upon
The battle site so near
I did not know its meaning
I learned to my surprise
As we walked to the trenches
There were tears in Grandpa's eyes*

*He showed me where the men dug in
While on the Métis side
A small boy stood right on the ground
Where brave young Métis died*

*I had respect for Grandpa
As he stood hat in hand
Right then I knew that this man felt
He stood on sacred land*

*The silence then was broken
As he began a prayer
He spoke their names so proudly
As if each man was there
A little boy stood so impressed
A promise he would keep
That once each year he'd come to pray
Where Métis heroes sleep*

*So many years have passed now
But something draws me there
I walk to see old trenches
And pray that Métis care*

*This I know that younger folk
Must pass tradition on
I know they'll build a better world
Where Peace and Love will dawn*

*I pray, like me, they understand
The reason I have found*

*To wear no hat when I walk on
Batoche's Sacred Ground.*

The dominant theme in Métis history is resistance¹ to coercive power. Métis resistances, no matter how small or spectacular, are Indigenous struggles against the colonialist policies of Euro-North Americans, which attempted to undermine the Métis' traditional cultures, spiritual systems, languages and economies. Aboriginal resistances such as Pontiac's Uprising (1763), the US Indian Wars (1791-1890), the centuries old Chiapas (Mayan) uprisings in southern Mexico and the 1869-70 and 1885 Resistances in Canada have had a profound impact upon North America's development. Often these Indigenous resistances had spiritual overtones such as the Ghost Dance, which precipitated the massacre of unarmed Dakota Sioux by the US military at Wounded Knee in 1890. The Métis have inherited this spirit of Indigenous resistance from their First Nations foremothers.

The Métis also inherited a spirit of resistance from two other groups of ancestors: the French Canadians and the Highland Scots. The Métis' French and French-Canadian *Coureurs de bois* and *Voyageur* forebears or "*gens du libre*" ("Freemen") resisted the hierarchical and stratified society of New France and the early British regime in Québec for the more egalitarian mores of First Nations societies. French Canadians also passed on another important legacy to the Métis – the concept of *la survivance* – or the passionate desire that language, faith and culture must be protected at all costs. The Highland Scots also contributed a spirit of resistance and passed a detestation of all things English to their Métis children. Their desire for a free Scotland may have been broken at the Battle of Culloden (16 April 1746), but their desire to compete with and

¹ **Resistance:** "The act or an instance of resisting; refusal to comply." *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, 1998. Resistance is a term, which has positive connotations. One needs only think of the Free French Forces under General Charles DeGaulle during the Second World War to appreciate this fact. Because this term is positive, Aboriginal people in North America and throughout the World, have begun to describe their ancestors struggles against Europeans as just "resistances" against genocidal or near genocidal policies. For instance, the Métis of Western Canada refer to the North-West Resistance rather than "Rebellion," and First Nations groups across the continent refer to Pontiac's, Tecumseh's or Sitting Bull's Resistances. **Rebellion:** "Open resistance to authority, esp. organized armed resistance to an established government" *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, 1998. For instance, in Canadian history, there were events, which have been called the Upper and Lower Canadian Rebellions (1837-38) and the Métis-led Red River (1869-70) and Northwest Rebellions (1885). In all these cases, groups of people "rebelled" against distant government authority in London and Ottawa. Rebellion is a term, which generally has negative connotations in

beat the English in the Fur Trade Wars (1780s-1821) was evident. They created the only real rival to the English-owned Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) – the North West Company (NWC) and staffed it with Métis, Scots, Americans and French Canadians. These French-Canadian and Celtic traditions of resistance fused with the Aboriginal spirit of resistance among the Métis to produce a particularly visceral reaction to "*anglais*" or "English" oppression.

These concepts of resistance were embedded into Métis thought as early as Métis group identity crystallized in the Red River Settlement in the early 1800s. A central tenet of this early Métis nationalist thinking was the notion that they constituted "*une nouvelle nation*" or a "new" nation of people both part of but distinct from Indigenous and European traditions. With this concept of popular sovereignty, the Métis felt that their Aboriginal rights were violated when the Saulteaux Chief Peguis treated with the HBC in order to create the Selkirk Colony in 1811, without consulting them. Later at the Battle of Seven Oaks (June 19, 1816), the Métis, under Cuthbert Grant, resisted the HBC's efforts to curb their livelihood as fur trade provisioners. The Métis poet and raconteur Pierre Falcon (1793-1876) indicated in his famous song "*La Bataille des Sept Chênes*" (the *Battle of Seven Oaks*) that the HBC mercenaries were "foreigners" and "Englishmen" bent on "robbing" the country and the *Bois-Brûlés* (the Métis - the "half-burnt stickmen") "chased" them from the battlefield. Even prior to the battle at Seven Oaks, the Métis created the oldest patriotic flag indigenous to Canada, the Métis infinity flag, which symbolizes the fusing of Indigenous and European cultures to create a new people that will exist forever. Armed with the psychological concept that they constituted a new nation, the Métis become a dominant force on the northern plains.

that these uprisings are almost always put down, and the insurgents, marginal people, are usually depicted as pawns, and exploited by a group of elites for less than altruistic ends.

The Métis struggle against the HBC lasted another thirty-three years after the Battle of Seven Oaks. Their *gens du libre* ethic under-girded the Métis free-trade movement of the 1830s to '40s – a resistance against the HBC trading monopoly in Rupert's Land. In 1845, the Company, fearing growing Métis power, successfully petitioned the Crown to have British regulars sent to Red River to forestall a possible resistance over the free trade issue. It was during this period that the Plains Cree began to call the Métis "*Otipemisiwak*" or those who own themselves. After years of ignoring the HBC's monopoly, the Métis resolved the issue on May 17, 1849, when they challenged the Company to enforce its monopoly after it imprisoned the Métis trader Guillaume Sayer for fur trafficking. The Company acquiesced, being powerless to stop the Métis show of force. Led by (Jean) Louis Riel Sr. (1817-1864), the Métis proudly proclaimed "*le commerce est libre! Vive la liberté!*" or "*There's free trade! Long live freedom!*" To the Métis, it made sense to trade with the Americans because their goods were cheaper and were usually of better quality than the HBC's British-made items. Moreover, the Métis also had a strong aversion to trading with a company that failed to include them in its governing and economic policies.

Those Métis who were employed with the HBC also protested working conditions and the Company's racist advancement practices. For instance, the Métis who manned the York boat brigades along western and northern water routes engaged in frequent work stoppages and slowdowns throughout the 1840s, '50s and '60s. Hours were long and many journeys were extremely arduous. Advancement in the Company hierarchy for both the English and French Métis was virtually non-existent. A seasonally employed boatman could never hope to become more than a labourer. However, a successful job action could force concessions from a recalcitrant employer. Low-ranking Métis clerks, however, had no such recourse, because there were so few of them and could be easily replaced, if necessary. All they could do was write letters and hope that at least one of their supervisors believed in merit and not ethnicity as a basis for advancement.

Early Métis resistances were not just economically based – they had political overtones. They were not always militant either; they could be quite passive. For instance, the Métis drafted petitions, as early as 1830, to ensure that the Council of Assiniboia, the HBC-appointed governing council, had Métis representation. In 1839, Cuthbert Grant, the Métis leader, was appointed to the council, but any active Métis voice was muted when he was co-opted or bought-off by the Company. In the early 1840s, the Métis wrote petitions that argued that they had Aboriginal rights to the land and that their Aboriginal title should be recognized in a treaty. This passive form of resistance also included lobbying by such Métis leaders as Pascal Bréland (1811-1896) and Alexander Isbister (1822-1883), who lived in London. In 1857, Isbister presented a case for entrenching Métis rights before the Imperial Parliament in Westminster.

Each Métis resistance originated out of a heartfelt desire to preserve the Métis' culture, language(s), spiritual systems and economic activities. Indeed, for a nation to exist with any measure of unity, a common national language, culture, and a general will, a founding myth, and a sound economic base are necessary. The early Métis had some of these including a language (Michif) a founding myth (the Battle of Seven Oaks), flag (the infinity flag), leader (Cuthbert Grant), national poet and songwriter (Pierre Falcon), and a common economic base as bison hunters and fur trade provisioners. Traditional Métis resistances entailed personal choices to resist assimilative policies. The lamentable but defiant words of a Métis voyageur, documented in the 1850s, encapsulates this spirit of resistance:

Where do I live? I cannot say. I am a Voyageur – I am a Chicot mister. I live everywhere. My grandfather was a Voyageur; he died on the voyage. My father was a Voyageur; he died on the Voyage. I will also die while on voyage and another Chicot will take my place. Such is the course of our life. (Translation – Darren R. Préfontaine)

At other times, Métis resistances involved moving to areas where there was little or no European settlement such as Cumberland House and La Loche (in what is now

northern Saskatchewan) or to the Peace River Country of What is now eastern British Columbia and northwestern Alberta.

With a myopic and Eurocentric worldview, past scholars, fed by healthy doses of Social-Darwinism, argued that the Métis and other “primitive” Indigenous peoples irrationally resisted against “civilization” and the on-ward march of progress. However, as has already been indicated, Métis resistances revolved around self-government, economic, social and cultural matters. These were rational calculations that were perceived by most Métis as necessary responses to ensure group survival and not the dying gasps of a rapidly fading culture.

While enjoying popular support, Métis resistances were not universally supported within the Métis community. For instance, most “Country-Born”, English-speaking Protestant mixed-bloods did not support their Francophone/Michif and Catholic cousins during their various resistances. Cuthbert Grant opposed the Métis free trade movement until his death in the 1840s. Furthermore, economic issues prior to the Red River Resistance divided the Métis. In fact, during the 1869-70 and 1885 Resistances, the historic Métis community was divided between Anglophones and Francophones, the bourgeoisie and working class and those who supported the Confederation project and those who did not. No leader could transcend these divisions, not even Louis Riel or Gabriel Dumont. Riel faced opposition from many prominent Métis including James Mackay, Norbert Welsh, Pascal Bréland, Charles Nolin, and Xavier Lentendre dit Batoche. During the Red River Resistance, Louis Riel and the Provisional Government relied almost exclusively on the muscle of a few hundred seasonal Métis boatmen and bison hunters. By contrast, the Red River Métis population was approximately 10,000 in 1870. Finally, only 200 or so Métis resisted the Canadian State in 1885. Divisions within Métis society continued when Adrian Hope, Peter Tomkins, James Brady, Malcolm Norris and the rest of the Métis leadership led resistances against the poverty and discrimination facing the Métis in Western Canada prior to and after the Second

World War. These leaders faced opposition from within Métis society based on class interests. Despite these internecine (internal) divisions, they accomplished a great deal, especially in entrenching various Métis political societies, establishing economic cooperatives and creating the Alberta Métis colonies.

II The Battle of Seven Oaks and the birth of Métis nationalism

The historic Métis of Rupert's Land were the only mixed-blood population in what is now Canada to develop nationalism. Métis group consciousness may have developed earlier in the Red River Valley and elsewhere. However, nationalism and its mission-based ethos came to fruition by the Red River Métis only after 1800. The historic Métis' nationalist mission was to preserve their independent Aboriginal way of life from those who wanted to destroy it. Thus, the term resistance is a very important concept when analyzing early Métis nationalism. Early Métis nationalists tried to preserve a certain way of life, however, their actions were not backward-looking as such observers as Giraud and Stanley have maintained. It did not prevent the triumph of "progress" over "savagery", but tried to prevent the imposition of one culture over another.

Some controversy exists as to whether or not early Métis nationalism was the autonomous and spontaneous product of Métis group identity. Some scholars maintain that early Métis nationalism was the product of the manipulation of the North West Company (NWC), meaning that the Métis did not have a will of their own². This has been the dominant canon in Canadian scholarly discourse. However, to argue that the Métis resistance fighters of 1812-1816 were mere pawns of the two warring fur trade companies is a facile construct. Could it not be possible that the immediate interests of the NWC and Cuthbert Grant's followers were the same?

² See MacLeod, Margaret and Morton, W. L. *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974. Peter C. Newman, *Caesars of the Wilderness*. Markham: Penguin Books, 1987.

The first stirrings of Métis nationalism occurred between 1812-1814 between the forks of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. In 1812, the Selkirk Settlers began arriving in Rupert's Land, under the colonization efforts of Lord Selkirk, the major shareholder in the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC). The NWC resented this move since settled agrarians would be detrimental to the fur and bison trades. The area was excellent bison hunting ground, and much of the pemmican produced in the region was by First Nations and Métis fur trade employees. The Métis were enraged that Lord Selkirk brought landless and destitute colonists to the area without first consulting the territory's Indigenous residents. Furthermore, the fact that he did not adequately provide them with provisions seemed shortsighted and cruel. Unfortunately, crops failed in the first two years of settlement, and to ensure that the settlers did not starve, the HBC governor for Assiniboia, Miles Macdonnell, issued a series of edicts in 1814, known as the *Pemmican Proclamations*. The first proclamation prohibited the export of pemmican, and the second tried to curb the Métis' practice of running the buffalo, which usually took the buffalo out of the territory for better hunting grounds further south.

The *Pemmican Proclamations* were the primary impetus to an emerging Métis nationalism. The Métis bison hunters were united in their efforts to wage war against the HBC, the company responsible for interrupting their way of life. As a result, the Métis burned the Selkirk Settlers' crops, drove away their cattle and harassed them. The Métis buffalo hunters appointed Cuthbert Grant, a Scots-Cree mixed blood, as their military leader. While it is true that the NWC further encouraged Métis nationalism, the Métis did not need much prodding since they felt that their way of life was being adversely affected. They continued to hunt bison, trade pemmican with the NWC and thus ignored the *Pemmican Proclamations*. The Métis even arrested Macdonnell for interfering with Métis sovereignty and ordered the settlers' deportation. In 1815, the HBC capitulated to the Métis terms and issued a treaty.

1815 HBC and Métis Treaty

1. *All Settlers to retire immediately from this river, and no appearance of a colony to remain.*
2. *Peace and amity to subsist between all parties, traders, Indians, and freemen, in future, throughout these two rivers, and on no account any person to be molested in his lawful pursuits.*
3. *The honourable Hudson's Bay Company will, as customary enter this river, if they think proper, from three to four of their former trading boats, and from four to five men per boat as usual.*
4. *Whatever former disturbance had taken place between both parties, that is to say, the honourable Hudson's Bay Company and the Halfbreeds of the Indian Territory, to be totally forgotten and not to be recalled by either party.*
5. *Every person retiring peaceable from this river immediately shall not be molested in their passage out.*
6. *No person passing the summer for the Hudson's Bay Company, shall remain in the buildings of the Company but shall retire to some other spot, where they will establish for the purpose of trade.*

Signed

Cuthbert Grant, Bostonais Pangman, Wm. Shaw, Bonhomme Montour, The Four Chiefs of the Half-breeds, James Sutherland, James White

Red River Indian Territory, Forks, Red River, 25 June, 1815.

The treaty proved to be the first victory of Métis nationalism. The victorious Métis resistance fighters began calling themselves "*la nouvelle nation*", the new nation. They now had a distinct flag: the infinity flag, which symbolized the coming together of two cultures to form a new and distinct people with inherent rights to the land and its resources. However, their tranquility was short lived: the new HBC governor, Robert Semple, desired HBC control of the local buffalo and fur trades and soon more settlers emigrated to the Red River and Assiniboine River Valleys.

Confrontation was inevitable. On June 19, 1816, in what is now present-day Winnipeg, a Métis/French Canadian patrol happened upon a group of HBC employees, mercenaries and Selkirk Settlers. A scuffle ensued and several of the HBC men and settlers were killed. In the Métis oral memory and through the celebrated songs of Pierre Falcon, this event is remembered as a great Métis victory, but to others, as historian Lyle Dick demonstrates, the Métis at Seven Oaks premeditated a "massacre" –

a particularly “bloodthirsty” and “savage” act³. For instance, Peter C. Newman’s recent CTV history of the HBC shows the Métis massacring helpless Selkirk Settlers, all the while encouraged by the NWC. Incredulously, the actor who narrated the voice of Métis leader Cuthbert Grant in the “docuhistory” had a Highland Scots accent! In fact, as late as 1957, W.L. Morton argued that:

This piece of savagery (the Battle of Seven Oaks) was matched elsewhere. The wounded were knifed and tomahawked, the dead stripped and ripped up after the Indian fashion. The wild blood of the brûlés was boiling, and it was some time before Grant could check their savagery⁴.

Undoubtedly, C.W. Jeffrey's depiction of the "Massacre at Seven Oaks, 19 June 1816", in the 1940s (National Archives of Canada C-073663)⁵ continues to colour historians and popular analysis of this long ago event.

Of course, perceptions have changed and, outside of popular history books and documentaries, the accepted interpretation is that the Métis and the HBC and settlers inadvertently stumbled upon each other and that Selkirk’s men died as a result of the superior marksmanship of the Métis. For instance, Manitoba historian J.M. Bumsted contends that the Battle of Seven Oaks was a “(s)pontaneous eruption of violence between two armed forces emotionally prepared for trouble, rather than an act of mass murder”⁶. Furthermore, he asserts that the Métis did not take part in the post-battle slaughter and mutilation of the bodies of the Selkirk Settlers and that the Métis at Seven Oaks were active agents in their actions and not NWC puppets.

The Battle of Seven Oaks, by Pierre Falcon

*Would you like to hear me sing
of a true and recent thing?
It was June nineteen, the band of Bois-Brûlés
Arrived that day,
Oh the brave warriors they!*

³ Dick, Lyle, “The Seven Oaks Incident and the Construction of a Historical Tradition, 1816-1970”, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, Vol. 2, 1991, pp.91-113. See also Lyle Dick, “The Seven Oaks Incident and the Construction of a Historical Tradition, 1816 to 1970”, in Catherine Cavanaugh and Jeremy Mouat (Editors), *Making Western Canada: Essays on European Colonization and Settlement*. Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996, pp. 1-30.

⁴ Morton, W.L. *Manitoba: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957, p. 49.

⁵ See John Herd Thompson, *The Illustrated History of Canada: Forging the Prairie West*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 21.

⁶ Bumsted, J.M. *Fur Trade Wars: The Founding of Western Canada*. Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 1999, p.149.

*We took three foreigners prisoner when
We came to the place called Frog, Frog Plain.
Who'd come, you see,
To rob our country.*

*Well we were just about to unhorse
When we heard two of us give, give voice.
Two of our men cried, "Hey? Look back, look back!
The Anglo-Sack
Coming for to attack."
Right away smartly, we veered about
Galloping at them with a shout!
You know we did trap all, all those Grenadiers!
They could not move
Those horseless cavaliers.
Now we like honourable men did act,
Sent an ambassador-yes, in fact!
"Monsieur Governor! Would you like to stay?
A moment spare-
There's something we'd like to say."*

*Governor, Governor, full of ire.
"Soldiers!" he cries. "Fire! Fire."
So they fire the first and their muskets roar!
They almost kill
Our ambassador!*

*Governor thought himself a king
He wished an iron rod to swing.
Like a lofty lord he tries to act.
Bad luck, old chap!
A bit too hard you whacked!*

*When we went galloping, galloping by
Governor thought that he would try
For to chase and frighten us Bois-Brûlés,
Catastrophe!
A bit too hard you whacked!
Dead on the ground lots of grenadiers too,
Plenty of grenadiers, a whole slew.
We've almost stamped out his whole army.
Of so many
Five or four left there be.*

*You should have seen those Englishmen-
Bois-Brûlés chasing them, chasing them.
From bluff to bluff they stumbled that day
While the Bois-Brûlés
Shouted "Hurray!"*

*Tell, oh tell me who made up this song?
Why it's our own poet, Pierre Falcon.
Yes, she was written, this song of praise-
Come sing the glory
Of the Bois-Brûlés.*

Pierre Falcon

III The Historiography of the Red River Resistance, 1869-70

1) Background: The History

The Red River Resistance had many causes, including economic, social and political considerations. By, 1868, bison had become scarce in the Red River Settlement. Famine and pestilence also caused great hardship in the district⁷. At this time, the Red River Métis and Country Born were facing a period of intense social and economic transition. Since the early 1850s, settlers from Canada West (Ontario after 1867) had begun arriving in the district and irrevocably altered the region's demographic, social, economic and political landscape. The Canadian settlers loudly demanded political integration with the Province and later Dominion of Canada. In 1869, the Ontarians living in the Red River District had their wish: the federal government purchased Rupert's Land, without consulting with its Indigenous residents, for £300,000 and 1/25th of all its fertile land. The purchase greatly alarmed the colony's Aboriginal inhabitants⁸. Nevertheless, even before the formal land transfer was to be confirmed on December 1, 1869, government surveyors, in the autumn of 1868 and summer of 1869, surveyed the land in order to create townships. To the Métis, this amounted to trespassing since the surveyors did not inform them about the survey and did not recognize their existing river lot systems. Moreover, many Métis feared that the new land holding system would lead to a large influx of outsiders and their eventual assimilation⁹. The surveyors' arrival ensured that Red River residents would organize politically in order to lobby the Dominion government to respect their title to the land and their river lot land tenure system. In October 1869, Louis Riel led a group of 18

⁷ J. M. Bumsted, "The Red River Famine of 1868", *Thomas Scott's Body and Other Essays on Early Manitoba History*. Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg Press, 2000, pp. 149-161.

⁸ In 1870, the non-First Nations population of Red River was 11,963. Approximately 5,757 were French-Métis and 4,083 were English-Halfbreeds. Source: Morton, W. L. *Manitoba: A History*. , p. 145.

⁹ In fact, in the spring of 1870, John A. Macdonald hinted that assimilation of the Métis was his goal: "These impulsive half-breeds have gone spoilt by this émeute (popular uprising) and must be kept down by a strong hand until they are swamped by an influx of settlers". John A. Macdonald to John Rae, February 23, 1870 in H. Bowsfield, Editor. *Louis Riel: Rebel of the Western Frontier or Victim of Politics and Prejudice?* Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1969, p. 34.

unarmed Métis to stop the surveyors on Métis lands. The Red River Resistance was born

The Red River Resistance officially ended on May 12, 1870 with the implementation of the *Manitoba Act*, which recognized Métis land, language and education rights. However, in the summer of that year, the federal government sent in troops, commanded by Garnet Wolseley, in order to “pacify” the region – as a result, many Métis including Louis Riel fled to the United States fearing for their lives. The Métis’ worst fears were realized when many were robbed, beaten up and, some cases, murdered by Canadian troops eager to exact revenge for Thomas Scott’s execution. The Métis tried to adapt to the new regime. For instance, on several occasions, they elected Louis Riel, despite his exile, as their representative for the riding of Provencher. With a bounty on his head, Riel was never able to take his seat in parliament; it would eventually belong to Sir George-Etienne Cartier. Unfortunately, the new society that was developing largely excluded the Métis from the province’s economic, social and political life. Furthermore, while the *Manitoba Act* provided 1.4 million acres of land for the province’s Métis, government mismanagement ensured that few Métis families settled on their Scrip lands in Manitoba. Not surprisingly, many Métis moved to other areas in what are now Saskatchewan, Alberta and the northern United States. The Red River Resistance was the Métis’ first encounter with Canada. They had resisted others before, but never a country or (the British) Empire. In the end, this was a battle, which they were bound to lose. After 1870, Ontarians controlled Manitoba and they made the new province in their image. This effected how the history would be recounted.

b) The Red River Resistance: a Historiographical Analysis

The 1869-70 Red River Resistance is one of the most controversial events in Canadian history. A myriad of interpretations exists about this seminal event, which led to the creation of Manitoba, and the eventual dispersal of many of the new province’s Métis.

Until recently, the traditional historiography on this topic was overtly political and centred on the role of Louis Riel in fostering resistance. Writing from the 1930s until the early '70s, Canadian historians W. L. Morton, George F. Stanley, and Donald Creighton were not sympathetic to the Métis resistance, which they felt imperiled Canada's troubled integration of the Prairie West. The French sociologist, Marcel Giraud, also wrote a Eurocentric¹⁰ history of the Métis. The first truly sympathetic interpretations of the Red River (and 1885) Resistance and Louis Riel's leadership were written by foreigners: the Frenchman Auguste de Trémaudan and the American Joseph Howard. By contrast, traditional English and French-Canadian historians were more concerned with how the events of 1869-70 and 1885 affected their own nation building schemes rather than their impact upon the Métis. Newer interpretations of the two great Métis resistances emerged from the late 1960s onwards. Some academics have reworked the traditional political interpretation of the Métis resistances; this group includes Thomas Flanagan and J.M. Bumsted. Others such as Howard Adams and D. N. Sprague provide readers with an interpretation of the Red River Resistance, which is sympathetic to the Métis and critical of the federal government. Finally, the Manitoba historian Frits Pannekoek has a social interpretation and Gerhard J. Ehns provides readers with an economic explanation of the Red River Resistance.

The "Riel industry" – the study of the 1867-70 and 1885 Resistances – is largely an enthusiasm of English-speaking Canadians. In fact, French-Canadian and later Québécois historians have done little to provide a thorough analysis of these events. From the late nineteenth century until the 1930s, traditional French-Canadian historians – such as Lionel Groulx, Thomas Chapais and Thomas Ferland – while sympathetic to the plight of the Franchophone Métis, nevertheless argued that the English-Canadian response to the Métis in the 1869-1885 period was really an attack on

¹⁰ **Eurocentrism:** Is a bias, which many people in the West have long had towards Indigenous cultures throughout the world. Essentially, the Eurocentric worldview emphasizes that every thing of value and virtue has come from Christian and capitalist-based Western European and North American society, and everything from non-western cultures is not as important. "Evaluating other races and cultures by criteria specific to one's own. Believing in the inherent superiority of one's own race or culture". *The Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, 1998.

French Canada. That French-Canadian historians transformed two Aboriginal resistances several thousand kilometres from Québec into an assault on French-Canadian civilization was quite typical of the poisoned political and cultural climate that has long existed between French and English Canada.

From the 1930s until the early 1970s, George F. Stanley had the most enduring interpretation of the Red River Resistance. In fact, as the first professional historian to write about Louis Riel and the Métis, Stanley became an authority on the two Métis resistances. His monograph – *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* – written in the 1930s, long remained the orthodox interpretation. Stanley argued that while the federal government badly mishandled Rupert's Land transfer to Canada, its dealings with the Métis were honourable. While downplaying the federal government's controversial role in this drama, Stanley, using the Frontier Thesis, portrayed the Métis as static and aberrant primitives holding up the march of progress. "Both the Manitoba insurrection and the Saskatchewan rebellion were the manifestation in Western Canada of the problem of the frontier, namely the clash between civilized and primitive peoples..."¹¹

Stanley failed to assess any of the pressing social and economic factors, which compelled the Métis to resist Canada's annexation of Rupert's Land. As the Indigenous settlers of Rupert's Land, the Métis wanted to be consulted about the transfer of their homeland to Canada. Not surprisingly, they feared that English-Canadian settlement would lead to their assimilation. While a whole community was concerned about its collective future, Stanley argued that Louis Riel was the sole impetus behind the resistance. It was his ambition, personality and demagoguery, which duped the childlike Métis population into "rebellion". Stanley's analysis therefore was an extension of the Great Man of History School of Historical Interpretation. However, Stanley argued that since the "rebellion" led to a minimum amount of bloodshed and

created a new province, the Métis did not deserve hatred or contempt. Nevertheless, after the passing of *The Manitoba Act*, the Métis were mistreated because they executed Thomas Scott on March 4, 1870. Until that event, the resistance was "...almost bloodless, but this regrettable event aroused the latent racial and religious passions which have been so deplorably a feature of Canadian history, and left bitter memories that were not soon forgotten"¹².

In 1945, Marcel Giraud, a French ethnologist, expanded Stanley's ethnocentric analysis in *Le métis canadien*, a massive sociological history of the Métis from their genesis, through the resistances and into the early 1900s. Giraud argued that the Métis were savage primitives who irrationally resisted against the superior culture of English Canada. While his monograph contains meticulous research, it unfortunately articulates the Savage-Civilization Dichotomy and is tempered by sweeping generalizations about the Métis' alleged characteristics. For instance, Giraud maintained that the Métis' love of the bison hunt, failure to become yeoman farmers and to properly listen to the advice of their priests kept them backward. Giraud dismissed the activities of those Métis involved in the traditional economy as "distractions" rather than "occupations" and when indigent Métis sold their land to priests, he hoped that this "unambitious race" would be substituted by the more industrious Anglo-Saxon or German "race"¹³. What is remarkable about this discourse is its racist overtones, which was written while Nazi Germany imposed artificial racial hierarchies in its war against humanity. Historian D. N. Sprague argues that Giraud's extreme Eurocentric interpretations of traditional Métis society "...were reflections of origin rather than rational adaptations likely to give way to new responses in subsequent historical development".¹⁴

¹¹ vii, 1960

¹² (pg. 106).

¹³ (pg. 390)

¹⁴ (Sprague p.5)

English-speaking Canada's most prolific conservative historians, William Morton and Donald Creighton, embraced the Stanley-Giraud thesis of "primitive" Métis clashing with "civilization". For instance, in 1950, William Morton wrote that the Métis practiced an indolent and "rude" agriculture, when not gallivanting on the prairie in such of bison. Morton believed that the Métis were defeated in the end through defects of character. "It was their tragedy that the insanity and violence of Riel, reflecting the inherent instability and ready violence of his own uncertain people, ruined his achievement and destroyed his nation"¹⁵.

Morton however, in 1957, slightly revised his interpretation of the Métis and the Red River Resistance with the publication of *Manitoba: A History*. Morton now argued that the Métis resisted Canadian authority in 1869-70, not because they were primitive nomads, but because they could no longer maintain their bison-hunting lifestyle, and that they preferred French Canadians teach them the rudiments of agriculture rather than English Canadians¹⁶. In this instance, they resisted the Rupert's Land transfer to Canada not as their own people, but as French Canadians determined to preserve their Francophone and Catholic heritage in the face of large-scale Anglo-Protestant immigration. Morton obviously projected the ever-present national unity debate between English and French Canada onto this Métis struggle for self-government¹⁷. In addition, even though the Canadian government tried to obtain British military assistance against the Métis and used Donald Smith to try to bribe Louis Riel and thus undermine his support from within the Métis community, Morton argued that Canada's dealings with the Métis were benign. For instance, the Wolesley Expedition and the systematic destruction of Métis properties and lives that followed in its wake was actually called a "mission of peace"¹⁸. Succinctly put, Morton was an apologist for

¹⁵ (Beaver, Sept. 1950 p.67)

¹⁶ (Page 2).

¹⁷ p.5)

¹⁸ (p.143) The repression of the Red River Métis by Canadian soldiers during the Wolseley expedition is one of those "uncomfortable" facts, which was either ignored or downplayed in the historiography. For a thorough understanding of how the Métis people were repressed following the Wolseley expedition, consult Frederick John Shore, *The Canadians and the Métis: The Re-creation of Manitoba, 1858-1872*. PHD Thesis, Department of History: Winnipeg: University of Manitoba.

John A Macdonald and the Dominion government, although he was the first Canadian historian to call the events of 1869-70 a “resistance”.

Another apologist for the Macdonald government's lacklustre Métis policy was Donald G. Creighton, the preeminent English-Canadian historian from the 1930s until the mid 1960s. Creighton was a firm believer in the Laurentian Thesis¹⁹ of national development, which maintained that Canada created a national economy along the St. Lawrence Valley-Great Lakes Corridor and extended its hinterlands westward and eastward. He preferred the larger national picture and analyzed the role of “great” men such as John A. Macdonald whose vision built a nation. Since the Métis and Louis Riel, served as foils to Macdonald's dream, they were excoriated²⁰. Most of Creighton's discussion of the Métis and his idol, John A. Macdonald, is in his massive and well written two-volume (especially Volume II) political history of Canada's first Prime Minister. Creighton felt that the wily Prime Minister dealt fairly with the “half-breed rioters” during the Red River Resistance since he had to negotiate with a rogue regime (the Provisional Government), whose land entitlement, linguistic, religious and educational demands were unrealistic – all the while satisfying the British, Ontario and French Canada²¹. Finally, the Métis demand for provincial status for the Red River Colony was “absurdly premature”²².

Auguste de Trénuadan's *La Nation métisse dans l' Ouest Canadien*, written in 1936 on behalf of the L'Union nationale de la métisse de Saint Joseph, an early twentieth-century Manitoba Métis nationalist organization, was the first sympathetic history of the Métis. Trémaudan wrote that the Métis were a martyred people who suffered

¹⁹ The Laurentian Thesis – as advocated by Donald Creighton in *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence* (1937) and by Harold A. Innis in *The Fur Trade in Canada* (1930) – maintained that the national and economic development of Canada occurred through the exploitation of key staples, fur, timber and wheat by British-Canadian merchants living along the St. Lawrence river system. As Canada expanded westward, it exploited the hinterlands inhabited by Métis and First Nations peoples. Like other grand national developmental theories based on ethnic and regional exploitation, this thesis fell into disuse since it glorified the economic exploitation of all of Canada's regions for southern Ontario's and Montreal's benefit. Source: A. Brian McKillop, “Laurentian Thesis” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Vol. II -- For-Pat. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1985, pp. 981-82.

²⁰ Donald Creighton, *The Old Chieftain*, p. 416. “Had Riel determined to put down the heavens because his own private demands for money were ignored?”

²¹ (p 59-63)

greatly at the hands of their English-Canadian tormentors – a clear extension of French-Canadian themes. This Catholic and French people resisted the grand schemes of the Orange Lodge, Ontario expansionists and a francophobe Prime Minister and paid the ultimate price, the destruction of their way of life and nation. Trémaudan argued that the Métis should not be labeled as rebels because they were goaded into resisting Canada by such obnoxious Red River-Ontarians as Dr. Schultz and by the federal government's indifference. Moreover, the Métis had the right to question the transfer of Rupert's Land to Canada because they were its Indigenous inhabitants.

There have been other monographs about the two Métis resistances, which have been sympathetic towards the Métis cause. These fall into two categories: those written by the Métis themselves or by other scholars. The First of these sympathetic works was Joseph Howard's *Strange Empire: Louis Riel and the Métis People*, written in 1952. Howard empathized with the Métis cause during the Red River Resistance, to the point that he called Wolseley Expedition a "Crack Pot Crusade"²³. Howard was also clearly enamoured with Louis Riel's leadership and even called him "Louis" on several occasions. This passage is particularly telling:

The twenty-five year old President of the 'New Nation', a novice in the tricky game of statecraft, had all but forced a checkmate in his opening gambit and gone on to play a strong middle game. If he chose now to resign, he could do so with the knowledge that he won most of what he sought for his people and grudging respect for his abilities from an arrogant an adversary as any challenger ever faced²⁴.

Other books with a pro-Métis perspective on the Red River Resistance were written from the late 1960s onwards. These include Howard Adams' *Prison of Grass*, the Association of Saskatchewan Métis and Non-Status Indians (AMNSIS)' *Louis Riel: Justice Must Be Done*, and D.N. Sprague's *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885*. In *Prison of Grass*, Howard Adams argued that the Red River Resistance was a civil war between the Francophone Métis working class and the Country Born and the Francophone Métis bourgeoisie. The latter wanted to retain the existing economic and political

²² (Sprague p. 10).

²³ P. 195

order in a loose federation, and the former desired a centralized union in order to create larger economic markets²⁵. In *Justice Must be Done*, the AMNSIS maintained that Riel's actions in 1860-70 were both just and legal under international law since standard international protocol dictates that when one nation incorporates another outside of conquest, it must negotiate with its occupants²⁶. This is something, which Canada forgot to do when its agents moved into Rupert's Land. In the early 1980s, the Manitoba Metis Federation hired historian D. N. Sprague to determine whether or not the federal government had honoured its land entitlement promises to the Métis – the end result of this research was *Canada and the Métis*. Sprague argued that the rapid dissolution of the Métis land base, after Manitoba's entry into Confederation, starkly revealed the federal government's abandonment of its fiduciary obligation to the Métis²⁷.

Sprague is one of several Manitoba-based historians writing about the Red River Resistance; others include Frits Pannekoek, J. M. Bumsted and Gerhard Ehns. The historiography on this topic is quite lively since historians have offered a variety of interpretations. Frits Pannekoek, author of *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance, 1869-70*, argues that the Francophone-Catholic Métis and the Anglophone-Protestant Country Born were divided into two irreconcilable sectarian or religious communities due to the proselytizing of Protestant and Catholic missionaries. This accounted for the Country Born's lack of enthusiasm or hostility towards the Métis cause. Pannekoek also maintains that the Country Born welcomed annexation to Canada because they wanted to be integrated into Anglo-Canadian society and they wished to see their Métis cousins assimilated. However, as the late Irene Spyre indicated in "The Métis and Mixed Bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870" this is likely a flawed assumption since the Métis and the Country Born had extensive family ties. In

²⁴ p. 194

²⁵ p. 46-59

²⁶ p.35

²⁷ Sprague 89

addition, the fact that Pannekoek used Church documents, without any corroborating Métis oral history, diminishes his argument²⁸.

J. M. Bumsted has written several essays about the Red River Resistance, which culminates in his *Red River Rebellion* and his more recent *Thomas Scott's Body and Other Essays on Early Manitoba History* and in *Louis Riel v. Canada: The Making of a Rebel*. *The Red River Rebellion* is a straightforward political history, which avoids analyzing the controversial amnesty question (for Riel) and the expropriation of the Métis land base promised the Métis in 1870 via *The Manitoba Act*. It is, however, plagued by semantics, particularly since it uses the word "rebellion" rather than "resistance" – something, which the latter books have avoided²⁹. Finally, Gerhard J. Ehns, in *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century*, argues that the Métis, prior to the Red River Resistance, were making the transition from the traditional Aboriginal economy to a more sedentary agricultural and pre-industrial market economy. In response to Frits Pannekoek, Ehns argues that the real division in Red River society was social and not sectarian since the Métis and Country Born bourgeoisie resented Riel's "heavy-handed" methods as a threat to their commercial interests³⁰.

To conclude, the literature on the Red River Resistance is clearly multifaceted. It will no longer suffice to argue that this resistance was the result of a clash between "primitive" and "civilized" societies. Nevertheless, remnants of the old arguments remain. For instance, Stanley and Creighton's thesis that the federal government did not conspire to deprive the Métis of their land base after the implementation of *The Manitoba Act* and that Ottawa was moving amicably and honourably to solve the Métis' grievances in 1885 has been eagerly embraced by Thomas Flanagan³¹. In fact,

²⁸ pp. 95-118

²⁹ J.M. Bumsted, "Reporting the Resistance of 1869-70", *Thomas Scott's Body and Other Essays on Early Manitoba History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000, pp. 181-196.

³⁰ P. 128

³¹ Insert Thomas Flanagan

Flanagan is the heir apparent to Creighton's interpretation of Louis Riel's leadership during the 1869-70 and 1885 Resistances since he argues that these popular uprisings were the result of Riel's ambition and greed. Flanagan, who has provided his expertise to both the Canadian and Manitoba governments in a series of court cases against the Manitoba Métis Federation, also argues that the federal government dealt honourably with the Métis land question in Manitoba³². This debate will continue – especially since so much land and prime urban real estate is at stake³³.

IV. The Louis Riel Exoneration Issue: A View from the Media

I cannot fulfill my mission as long as I am looked upon as an insane being... I would not be executed as an insane man. It would be a great consolation to my mother, for my wife, for my children, for my countrymen...And in some way, I think... the verdict against me today is proof that maybe I am a prophet. Maybe Riel is a prophet; he suffered enough for it... I have been astray, not as an impostor, but according to my conscience.
Louis Riel

Yes, I have done my duty. During my life I have aimed at practical results. I hope that after my death, my spirit will bring practical results. All that I have done and risked...Rested certainly on the conviction that I was called upon to do something for my country... I know that through the grace of God, I am the founder of Manitoba.
Louis Riel, July 4, 1885

He shall hang here though every dog in Quebec (Shall) bark in his favour.
Sir John A. Macdonald

Riel and his followers were protesting against the Government's indifference to their problems and its refusal to consult them on matters of vital interest... Questions of minority rights have deep roots in our history; we must never forget that; in the long run, a democracy is judged by the way the majority treats the minority. Louis Riel's battle is not yet won.
Pierre Trudeau

Louis Riel (1844-1885)'s spectre still haunts Canada. Riel is, arguably, the most controversial figure in Canadian history. A hero to some, a traitor to others, Riel symbolizes every possible cleavage in nineteenth-century (and contemporary) Canadian society: Aboriginal versus European, French versus English, Roman Catholic versus Protestant, West versus East, and the oppressed versus the dominant. Despite these cleavages, interpretations of Riel are changing. Not surprisingly, every aspect of Riel's life, death and impact has been debated, ad nauseam. His heirs are even trying to

³² See Thomas Flanagan, *Métis Land Rights in Manitoba*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1991, p. 3; D. N. Sprague, "The Manitoba Land Question, 1870-1882" *Revue d'Etudes Canadiennes/ Journal of Canadian Studies*. Vol. 15, No.3 (Automne/Fall), pp. 74-84; Paul Chartrand. *Manitoba's Métis Settlement Scheme of 1870*. Saskatoon: Native Law Centre, University of Saskatchewan, 1991 and J. Sawchuck, *Métis Lands in Alberta*. Edmonton: Métis Association of Alberta, 1981.

³³ claim to land in Winnipeg

obtain strands of what may be his hair, which will likely be determined through genetic testing³⁴. Even the rope, which many believe to have been the instrument of his death, has been removed from a display at the RCMP Centennial Museum and has been sent away to determine if any of Riel's DNA has left any residue on its strands³⁵. Then of course there is the ongoing Louis Riel statue controversy in Winnipeg and Regina, which finally appears to be resolved³⁶.

In October 2002, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, in conjunction with the Dominion Institute, aired a three-hour special over three consecutive nights over the Louis Riel exoneration issue. Extensive coverage of the re-trial was conducted in *The National Post*³⁷. In effect, Louis Riel played by Guy Bertrand, a Québécois activist, was retried for the crime of High Treason. Riel was defended by prominent civil rights lawyer Edward Greenspan and prosecuted by Alan Lenczner. Following the retrial, Canadians were provided with an opportunity to vote for an acquittal or prosecution. Of the more than 9,600 people who voted, 87% voted to acquit Riel, which demonstrates that Canadians have begun to reassess Riel's legacy³⁸. Métis groups, specifically led by the Métis National Council, were opposed to the entire process, which did not involve any formal consultation from the Métis community, other than on the final evening when a variety of Métis panelists discussed Riel's legacy among the Métis and its impact upon their personal identities.

What the retrial and the ongoing exoneration issue demonstrate is that in all reality, Louis Riel is no longer just a Métis hero. Nor is he just another visceral reminder to French Canadians that Canada has never really tolerated the French fact outside of

³⁴ "Heirs claims Riel's hair", *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, April 16, 1999.

³⁵ Jim Bronskill and Jack Aubry "Offensive rope removed", *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, June 6, 1998 and Jim Bronskill, "Rope Linked to Riel's Hanging Sent for Testing", *National Post*, August 10, 1999.

³⁶ Francis W. Kaye, "Any Important Form: Louis Riel in Sculpture", *Prairie Forum*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 103-134.

³⁷ Maître Guy Bertrand, "Am I guilty because I fought by the side of my people", *The National Post*, October 23, 2002. Justice Thomas Berger, "Megalomaniac or defender of rights?", *The National Post*, October 23, 2002. Edward L. Greenspan, Q.C., "Riel was the government's scapegoat", *The National Post*, October 22, 2002. Alan Lenczner, "Riel deserves to be executed", *The National Post*, October 21, 2002. Bill Curry, "Métis lash out at 'white men' for freezing them out of Riel retrial", *The National Post*, October 22, 2002.

³⁸ Chris Wattie, "87% vote to acquit Riel", *The National Post*, October 24, 2002.

Québec. Riel's legacy now belongs to all Canadians. Even former Québec Prime Minister Lucien Bouchard has tried to link himself to Riel³⁹. The appropriation of their martyred hero by Québec and Canadian nationalists causes much discomfort to the Métis. However, such appropriation is to be expected since Riel thought of himself as a champion of not just his beloved people – “*le métis canadien*” – (the French-Canadian Métis) but also of the English-Métis, First Peoples, and neglected Prairie farmers, Jews, oppressed Roman Catholics and French Canadians. Indeed, reading Riel's diary amply demonstrates his concern for all humanity – a hallmark of a great leader. In Canadian history, no leader has tried to reach out to as many marginalized groups as Riel. Among other things, Riel was the first Canadian leader to publicly denounce anti-Semitism⁴⁰ – a remarkable development since the English and French-Canadian élite harboured anti-Semitic ideas until after the Second World War.

It is into this context that the federal government proposed to exonerate Riel from the crime of high treason for which he was executed on in November 16, 1885. On June 3, 1998, *Bill C-417: An Act respecting Louis Riel* passed first reading in the House of Commons. Two Québécois and four Western-Canadian MP's sponsored the Private Members' Bill. Here are some key points from the proposed act:

2. The Purpose of this act is to reverse the conviction of Louis Riel for high treason and to formally recognize and commemorate his role in the advancement of Canadian Confederation and the rights and interests of the Métis people and the people of Western Canada...it is consistent with history, justice and with the recognition of the unique and important contributions of Louis Riel to Canada and to the Métis people that the conviction of Louis Riel for high treason be reversed and that his historic role be formally recognized and commemorated. 3. Louis Riel is hereby deemed to be innocent of the charge of high treason. His conviction for high treason is hereby reversed. 6. Louis Riel is hereby recognized as a Father of Confederation and the Founder of the Province of Manitoba. 7. (1) Throughout Canada, in each and every year, the 15th day of July shall be known as "Louis Riel Day". (2) For greater certainty, Louis Riel Day is not a legal holiday or a non-judicial day. 8. Mark or commemorate by means of historical plaques, monuments, or in any suitable manner, the places and buildings where events of historical significance in the life of Louis Riel took place; (b) authorize the placing of a statue of Louis Riel on Parliament Hill; (c) undertake, pursue or sponsor research relating to these historical events and take appropriate steps to respect the historical record; (d) take appropriate action for the preservation of Métis culture, languages and history; and (e) establish a scholarship program for Métis students in Louis Riel's name⁴¹.

³⁹ R. John Hayes, "Quebec's Bouchard not able to fill Métis leader's shoes", *Wingspeaker Classroom Edition*, September 6, 1996, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁰ Jews were given full political freedom in Lower Canada in the early nineteenth century – a first for the British Empire. However, no leader, until Riel, publicly denounced anti-Semitism.

⁴¹ Public Works and Government Services Canada. *C-417: An Act respecting Louis Riel*. Ottawa: June 3, 1998.

Bill C-417 has become a *cause célèbre* in our national life. This proposed bill, precursors of which have died on the floor of the House of Commons, has stirred a great deal of controversy among political pundits, the media, historians, and the Métis political leadership. Some argue that by exonerating Riel, we are rewriting our history. Unfortunately, history and historical memory are never absolute, and since humans are invariably subjective in their view of the past, it should come as no surprise that the Riel issue keeps being revisited.

By introducing this legislation, the federal government was responding to strong public support to rehabilitate Riel. Astonishingly, 65% Canadians, according to a recent Angus Reid poll, now believe that Riel should be posthumously exonerated from the crime of high treason and should be recognized as a Father of Confederation for bringing Manitoba into Canada. Moreover, 75% of Canadians believe that Riel was not a traitor⁴². This rationale was behind the federal government's groundbreaking 1997 document *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*, which states that:

(n)o attempt at reconciliation with Aboriginal people can be complete without reference to the sad events culminating in the death of Métis leader Louis Riel. These events cannot be undone; however, we can and will continue to look for ways of affirming the contributions of Métis people in Canada and of reflecting upon Riel's proper place in Canada's history⁴³.

In the late 1990s not everybody saw things that way, however. Opposition to Riel's exoneration was strongest from the Canadian right. Thomas Flanagan, Canada's leading anti-Métis iconoclast, believes Riel was an indolent grafter, who exploited his people's cause for his own financial ends. Flanagan, once the Reform Party's main strategist, argues that Riel "resorted to arms precisely because a successful resolution of Métis complaints would have undercut his leadership". Moreover, "(c)harges of a rigged trial are bogus...they're built on accusations of non-existent conflicts of interest"⁴⁴. Therefore, in his view Riel has no grounds to be labeled a Canadian "hero". Flanagan further argues that the exoneration and its "sanctifying" of Riel could lead to

⁴² The National Post " 'Treasonous' Riel becoming a hero" March 30, 1999.

⁴³ Government of Canada, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*. Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997, p. 5

the Métis becoming a federal responsibility like Status First Nations. This would be too costly for taxpayers, would only benefit Métis politicians and lawyers and would only harm the Métis since it would make them “administered citizens of the state rather than self-supporting citizens”. Flanagan also links Riel’s exoneration to the threat of unilateral declaration of independence by Québec⁴⁵. He concludes by arguing “(g)ranting Louis Riel a posthumous pardon, or declaring him to be a Father of Confederation, would be a crucial step in the wrong direction. It would inevitably be interpreted as a statement that Riel’s rebellions were not the psychodrama of a self-styled prophet but justified attempts at redressing grievances”⁴⁶.

Some argued that Flanagan’s analysis is ideologically driven and based on a faulty understanding of the past. For instance, Zenon Pohoreck, a University of Saskatchewan Professor Emeritus in Anthropology, argued that Flanagan’s assertion that Canada bought Rupert’s Land in 1869 is incorrect since the young Dominion actually bought the Hudson’s Bay Company Royal Charter and the right to negotiate for the land with the region’s Aboriginal nations⁴⁷.

Nevertheless, many conservative commentators including Claire Hoy⁴⁸ and Andrew Coyne have embraced Flanagan’s anti-Riel mantra. After providing a detailed inventory of Riel’s alleged crimes, but failing to outline why some Métis felt the need to resist, Andrew Coyne argues that only in Canada could a man such as Riel become a hero. This circumstance is entirely Canada’s fault since:

*(w)e forget large swatches of our history, especially where these might contradict some convenient myths. We treasure only those who might be used in support of a particularistic grievance, by which the part might indict the whole. Riel is exonerated, a free man at the bar of history. It is only Canada that is convicted*⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ “The Sanctification of Louis Riel”, *Western Report*, June 1, 1998.

⁴⁵ Thomas Flanagan, “Are we really certain we want to sanctify Louis Riel?” *Western Report*, January 26, 1998.

⁴⁶ Thomas Flanagan “The drive to rehabilitate Louis Riel”, *The Globe and Mail*, January 29, 1998; reprinted in *Newest Review*, April/May 1998, pp. 13-16 and Thomas Flanagan “Crucial step in the wrong direction”, *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, May 30, 1998.

⁴⁷ Zenon Pohoreck “Siggins’s view of Riel role irks only biased historians”, *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, June 4, 1998.

⁴⁸ Claire Hoy “Riel as a Canadian hero hard to swallow”, *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, January 24, 1998.

⁴⁹ Andrew Coyne “Riel exoneration hurts Canada”, *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, May 30, 1998.

Fellow conservatives, historian David Bercuson and political scientist Barry Cooper, have their own pronouncement on Riel's posthumous exoneration. Riel had after all, in 1885, organized an "illegal" provisional government, which forced Ottawa to assert its sovereignty in the Prairie West. The end result was over one hundred dead Métis, First Nations and Euro-Canadian soldiers, settlers and religious. The two scholars maintain that Riel deserved his fate because his actions led to many deaths. Bercuson and Cooper conclude by arguing that Riel's exoneration will do nothing to alleviate the adverse social conditions, which affect many Métis⁵⁰.

The shrill denunciation of the proposed Riel exoneration did not end there. Ontario historian Roger Hall argued that the Riel exoneration is "revisionist history at its worst...It's awfully politically correct"⁵¹. From the extreme fringe, Norman Ritchie, the Orange Lodge's Grand Secretary, argues that exonerating Riel is akin to "clearing the Nazis"⁵². Doug Cuthand provided a First Nations perspective on Riel's proposed exoneration by arguing that it is racist to exonerate a man who had a beard and wore a suit while not doing the same for First Nations leaders who had braids and wore blankets⁵³. He concludes that Riel, like First Nations leaders, should not be sanitized for protecting their people's rights⁵⁴.

Canadian liberals and democratic socialists are generally more sympathetic to exonerating Riel than the country's right. While not overly sympathetic to Riel, who they feel brought vengeance upon his people, some of these commentators have established a middle ground position which posits that the Métis suffered greatly both in the historiography and in history after the 1885 Resistance. An editorial in the *Ottawa Citizen* argued that the proposed Riel exoneration is revisionism since the fact remains that Thomas Scott was murdered, and the implementation of the Red River

⁵⁰ David Bercuson and Barry Cooper, "Riel: Fanatic or Father of Confederation?" *The Globe and Mail*, May 23, 1998.

⁵¹ David Roberts, "Political correctness comes to the aid of Louis Riel", *The Globe and Mail*, January 8, 1998.

⁵² Jack Aubry "Orange Lodge leader denounces Riel bill", *The Calgary Herald*, May 15, 1998.

⁵³ Eight First Nations warriors were executed for their roles in the 1885 Resistance.

⁵⁴ Doug Cuthand, "Riel deserves better than to be sanitized", *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, June 12, 1998.

Provisional Government was a “rebellion”. The editorial concludes with the following argument:

*The old “march of civilization” story that justified European domination of Western Canada was certainly a barrier to an open society, and its loss is mourned by no one. And the desire to open Canada’s heritage to all our people is admirable. But in crafting that new heritage, we must not remove facts from it. We in the present may control the past, but we also have obligations to it, and to ourselves*⁵⁵.

Rosemary Spears, a left-of-centre columnist for the *Toronto Star*, provided a neutral view of the Riel exoneration issue by stating “Riel is a prime example of a historical figure whose story is told very differently in different parts of the country”. She indicates that the exoneration would “strengthen the Métis claim on land from which they were subsequently driven. It would mean, all these decades later, recognizing that the Métis were not traitors to the Crown but the legitimate occupants and defenders of territory in Manitoba, and later in Saskatchewan”⁵⁶.

To supporters of the exoneration, the fact that Riel gave his life for his people, when he had avenues to escape, only proved his altruistic ideals. Riel, despite his faults, tired to right wrongs which the Métis tried to have addressed through 77 written petitions – all of which were met with a sullen silence by “Old Tomorrow” (John A. Macdonald). As a result, Riel led a group of Métis followers into resistance. A significant body of opinion supports this interpretation. For instance, Peter C. Newman, one of Canada’s more popular amateur historians, argued that making Riel a Father of Confederation “is a worthy cause that deserves to be taken seriously. We don’t have nearly enough heroes in this country, and the Métis visionary richly deserves that recognition”. Newman further argues that Riel had strong initial support by settlers in the Saskatchewan Country, and that the 1885 Resistance saved the Canadian Pacific Railway from insolvency⁵⁷. In addition, Tracy Stevens, of *The Prairie Dog*, a Regina-based left-of-centre political paper, maintained that new evidence about the activities of Manitoba Appeal Court Judge, Justice Lewis Wallbridge, demonstrates the underhanded efforts

⁵⁵ *The Ottawa Citizen*, “Riel, Scott and history”, February 1, 1998, p. A12.

⁵⁶ Rosemary Spiers “Huge stake for Métis in Riel’s recognition”, *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, January 15, 1998.

⁵⁷ Peter C. Newman “Rewriting history: Louis Riel as a hero”, *MacLean’s*, April 12, 1999.

to ensure Riel's execution. She wondered whether Wallbridge was in a conflict of interest when he heard Riel's appeal after providing the government with a strategy to convict the Métis leader, or that he was a close friend of Thomas Scott⁵⁸ – thoughts first elucidated by Winnipeg lawyer Ron Olesky⁵⁹.

Popular writer Maggie Siggins, who recently wrote a popular biography of Riel, has also entered the fray with a pro-Riel interpretation. She argued that history and historical interpretation are not "static" – an attack on conservative historians who argue that Riel's exoneration is about revisionism. Siggins feels that recognizing Riel's contributions are about writing a wrong, and healing as a country. "As soon as Canadian society was sophisticated and humane enough to understand that the Aboriginal peoples of this land were treated harshly and unfairly by the Canadian government, a reappraisal of Riel and his politics began". Siggins praised Riel for having a coherent set of policies – a political vision, which most importantly brought Manitoba into Confederation. Siggins' concludes by stating: "Perhaps he (Riel) might have been pleased that he remained a bothersome ghost, forever haunting Canadians, reminding them that other cultures were well rooted long before the white settlers descended"⁶⁰.

Métis academics also support Riel's exoneration but for different reasons. Historian Olive Dickason asserted that:

... it's fair to call him a Father of Confederation...Riel in his battle to get recognition for the area, not only fought for the Metis but also the whites and the Indians. He did have a broad view...Riel has refused to die. He will torment Canadian historians until they resolve the problem. He refuses to die because he was hanged on specious grounds. And the things he brought forward were constructive. He had good ideas⁶¹.

Marxist sociologist Ron Bourgeault has another perspective on the proposed Riel exoneration.

While I support the rehabilitation of Riel, I think his real politics will remain buried in moral accolades from Ottawa about mistakes and misunderstandings. He may be elevated, but only

⁵⁸ Tracy Stevens, "The Re-Trial of Louis Riel", *The Prairie Dog*, July 1999, p. 9

⁵⁹ Ron Olesky, "Louis Riel and the Crown Letters", *Canadian Lawyer*, February 1998, pp. 12-15. See also "Lawyer revives Riel debate", *Saskatoon, StarPhoenix*, March 30, 1998.

⁶⁰ Maggie Siggins, "Riel's rehabilitation: Justice at last or pathetic revisionism? Affirmative", *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, May 30, 1998.

⁶¹ James Parker, "Debate reopens over Riel's place in history", *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, January 9, 1998.

if the politics can be effectively controlled. There will not be any admission from Ottawa of the historic role of the state in conquest, or whose interests were being served then, as today. Riel committed no crime other being a democrat, Christian, and an integrationist. For that, he was killed.

Bourgeault further argues that Riel led the 1869-70 and 1885 Resistances, which were "...national-democratic struggles, the culmination of many previous rebellions against colonialism, and were as much an internal civil war as they were external, anti-colonial conflicts". Moreover, Riel was no isolated and delusional thinker he was a "liberal-democrat" who tried to reconcile 19th century liberalism with Catholicism.

Undoubtedly, Riel was in intellectual conflict within himself, particularly as he had to come to terms with the agenda of advanced capitalism in western Canada towards marginalized peoples. Riel was a modernist in the tradition of 19th century liberalism. He understood the inevitability of the encroaching economic system and tried to incorporate Indian and Métis interests into it for their betterment. His personal conflict was a struggle to synthesize outdated, semi-feudal religious dogma with current liberal-democratic ideas. His liberalism became radical as he challenged the agenda of the Canadian state, and his Christianity dissenting as he dealt with the rigidity of the Roman Catholic Church and its relationship to the state. In fact, his Christianity was far more ecumenical than that of the churches. Riel became what may be considered an early liberation theologian⁶².

While most Métis academics support the exoneration, the Métis political leadership, most notably through the Métis National Council (MNC), oppose it since it distracts attention from the serious social issues facing Canada's half million Métis. Former MNC President Gerald Morin believed that it was fundamentally immoral to absolve Louis Riel of a crime when he did nothing wrong. "Riel and many Metis people fought and died for a cause...The Metis are still a landless people in Canada." To realize Riel's dream, Morin argued that it is best "to put in place the justice and vision we've been fighting for...we don't just want symbolic gestures"⁶³. The President of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, Clem Chartier, felt that the proposed bill "addresses the symbolism and does not deal with any of the real substantive issues facing the Metis people". Furthermore, "(w)hile the bill moves to the exoneration of Riel it does not address jurisdictional issues, claims policies, land rights or any of the rights Riel and our people fought and died for"⁶⁴. Yvon Dumont, the former Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and MNC President, argues the exoneration makes Riel appear as a criminal.

⁶² Ron Bourgeault, "Louis Riel: Hero of his People", *Newest Review*, April-May, pp. 13-16.

⁶³ "Metis oppose Riel bill", *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, July 9, 1999.

⁶⁴ *Aboriginal News*, July 1999

“(P)ardoned like a criminal, and recognized as a criminal who has been pardoned...It is an insult to the Metis nation”⁶⁵. David Chartrand, the President of the Manitoba Metis Federation, was particularly incensed that non-Aboriginal politicians proposed and drafted this bill without consulting the Métis community⁶⁶. Of course, not all Métis leaders oppose Riel’s exoneration: Louis Riel’s descendants support it, as does the Union nationale de Métisse de Saint Joseph, and Senator Thelma Chalifoux and the Métis National Council of Women⁶⁷.

In the final analysis, the debate about Riel’s place in Canadian history and in contemporary society has kept open a deep and long-standing wound in our national psyche. Is the exoneration a shameless pandering to political correctness, which will end up costing taxpayers dearly as the Canadian right maintains? Is it, as the Canadian left and centre maintain, about fundamental justice, the righting of a glaring wrong in Canadian history, a healing exercise, and a testament to Canada’s growing tolerance of its minorities? Is the exoneration a means to deflect attention away from the real problems facing the Métis Nation as argued by the MNC and its provincial affiliates?

Despite these vehemently held positions, there were other “rebels” in Canadian history, which have had a much more positive interpretation than Riel and the Métis. For instance, in 1837-38, Lower Canada (Québec) and in 1837 Upper Canada (Ontario) had popular uprisings against the Crown much like the Métis resistances in 1869-70 and 1885. However, the leaders of these struggles are seen as heroes in Central Canada because they challenged the power of the unelected elite, the Chateau Clique and the Family Compact, and because they later worked within the system in order to bring responsible government to the Province of Canada. Louis Hyppolyte Lafontaine was, like Riel, a “rebel” in 1837-38; however, he would become the first French-Canadian Prime Minister of the Province of Canada. Other “rebels” turned respectable were

⁶⁵ Metis oppose Riel bill

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ “Goodale backs Riel’s exoneration”, *Saskatoon StarPhoenix*, May 26, 1998.

George-Etienne Cartier, arguably the leader most responsible for the success of Confederation, and Louis Joseph Papineau, the patriarch of a political family, which includes Henri and Robert Bourassa. Why has history spared judgment on these men and only recently has begun to do the same for Riel and the other Métis resistance fighters? The answer to this question says a great deal about Canada's changing society.

V. Métis Resistances Concept Outline

I) The Métis and the concept of resistance

Concept of resistance: What kinds of resistances are there?

What sort of social, economic, spiritual and technological upheavals cause resistances, rebellions and revolutions?

The 19th century, when all the Métis resistances occurred, was a period of rapid change: technology, imperialism, spiritualism and science.

As a result of rapid change a host of popular uprisings and Native resistances occurred in the 1800s: Canadian Rebellions – 1837-38, Simon Bolivar and South America 1811-25, Europe – 1830 and 1848, destruction of Gordon's column at Khartoum in 1885 and Native American resistances: Pontiac's uprising 1763, Wounded Knee, 1890 and the Ghost Dance, 1880s-90s.

The Savage-Civilization Dichotomy vs. Cultural Relativism, and changing views of traditional cultures.

Where did the Métis concept of resistance come from?

The importance of terminology and semantics: definitions of such popular uprisings as rebellions, resistances, insurgencies, and revolutions.

II) The first Métis resistance, 1812-16

The Métis resistance at Seven Oaks: the Selkirk Settlement, the Pemmican Proclamations and the birth of Métis nationalism and its mission.

Early Métis nationalism: the Métis flag, songs, and military/political organization.

Were the Métis puppets of the North West Company?

The concept of "Agency" in history.

III) The Métis free trade movement, 1821-1849

Conditions in Red River Society, which necessitated resistance against the Hudson's Bay Company.

The Métis free trading tradition.

The Guillaume Sayer trial of 1849.

The Council of Assiniboia.

IV) The Métis fights against the Dakota, 1820s-1851

Why did these wars result?

Métis military organization based on the *Law of the Prairie*.

The end result: Battle of Grand Couteau, July 1851.

V) The Red River Resistance of 1869-70

1) Canada's "Manifest Destiny"

Ontario desired expansion, but Québec and the Maritimes did not.

Laurentian theory and Metropolis and Hinterland theories, pre-National Policy expansion

Canada acquires Rupert's Land without consulting the territory's Indigenous residents.
The economic and social background: economic transition, an end to the buffalo hunts and immigration of English Canadians to Red River.

2) Louis Riel becomes the champion of the Red River Métis
His early years and admiration of his father.
His formative years in Québec.
Why he was chosen to lead the Red River Métis: his qualities.

3) Louis Riel's protagonist: John A. Macdonald
What he thought of the Métis and what this meant.

4) Views from Red River
What each group in Red River thought of the resistance:
The French-Canadian Métis
The Country Born
The First Peoples
The English and French Canadians
The Americans
Why were the Métis divided? Why did many Métis resist? Why didn't the Country Born or the Métis bourgeoisie resist?

5) What Canadians thought about the Red River Resistance
Ontario's view.
Quebec and French Canada's view.
Maritime Canada's view.

6) What kind of struggle was the resistance: a rebellion, a civil, race or class war, or a struggle for national self-determination?
The Provisional Government.
The role of Louis Riel.
The execution of Thomas Scott.

7) Did the Métis resistance fighters obtain the results, which they were looking for?
The Manitoba Act.
The Wolseley Expedition.
Repression and the dispersal.
The Amnesty Question for Riel and Ambroise Lépine.
The dispossession of the Manitoba Métis land base.
Some successes: John Norquay.
Assimilation and marginalization: the creation of a new Ontario.

8) The historiography of the Red River Resistance
What is historiography?
Creighton, Stanley, Giraud and the perpetuation of the Savage-Civilization dichotomy.
Trémaudan, Howard, Adams and Sprague, a sympathetic view to the Métis.
Bumsted, Pannekoek and Ens, conflicting views from Manitoba.

VI) The 1885 Resistance

1) The dispersal of the Métis from Red River.
The move to Batoche area.

2) The grievances of the Northwest's residents
First Peoples.
Métis and Country Born.
The failed Scrip process.

The 1875 Council of St. Laurent.
The failure of the North West Council to represent the Métis.
The petition process.
Euro-Canadian settlers.

3) Louis Riel's return to Canada
His exile to America.
His growing sense of mission.
Excerpts from his diary.
His alleged insanity.
Why Riel was chosen to led the Métis once again.

4) Was there a conspiracy to engineer a Métis "rebellion" in order to finish the Canadian Pacific Railway?

5) The First Nations' resistance
The Cree resistance was unrelated to that of the Métis.
The arguments of John Tobbias, Blair Stonechild and William Waiser.
Did the Métis coerce the First Peoples into fighting?
Some Dakota and Assiniboine fought with the Métis.
The Frog Lake killings (April 2, 1885), the Battle of Cut Knife (May 2, 1885), the sacking of Battleford, and the aftermath.
The role of Big Bear, Poundmaker and Wandering Spirit.
Why were the Woodland Cree punished to a greater extent than the Métis, who instigated the resistance?

6) The Roles of Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel during the resistance
How did the roles of Dumont and Riel differ?
Did Riel make strategic mistakes, which cost the Métis the resistance?
Would Dumont's guerrilla tactics have led to a better result?

7) The military engagements fought by the Métis
Why didn't the Batoche Métis receive help from other Métis?
The Battle of Duck Lake, March 6, 1885.
The Battle of Fish Creek, April 24, 1885.
The Battle of Batoche, May 7-9, 1885.

8) The Resistance in context
Was it a resistance or a rebellion?
English Canada's role.
French Canada's role.
America's role.
Britain's role: the Empire in turmoil: Why Canada had to put down the resistance.
Fear of wide scale Aboriginal wars like in the Sudan, Afghanistan and the United States and fear of a war with the Russian Empire.

9) The Aftermath of the resistance
Louis Riel is executed and martyred by the Métis and French Canadians.
Was his trial and execution just?
Gabriel Dumont and others flee, but not Riel.
Assimilation and social displacement for the Métis.
The troubled legacy of Louis Riel in Canadian thought.

VI. Métis Resistance timeline, 1811-1885 Credit: Leah Dorion, Ron Laliberté and Father Guy Lavallée

1811 Lord Selkirk received a land grant of 116,000 square miles (300, 440 sq. km) near the Red River Valley for an agricultural settlement.

1814 In order to ensure an adequate food supply for the starving settlers, Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) official Miles Macdonell issued a proclamation on January 14 to prohibit the export of pemmican from the Assiniboia district.

1814 In July, Governor Miles Macdonell, fearing the Métis technique of running the buffalo would drive the herds from the Red River region, issued a proclamation, which forbade the Métis from hunting buffalo on horseback.

1815 In March, Governor Semple began to strengthen HBC control in the region. The HBC seized North West Company (NWC) Forts Gibraltar and Pembina. This sudden assertion of authority created tension between the Métis and the HBC.

1816 On June 19, the Métis, led by Cuthbert Grant, defeated the HBC at the Battle of Seven Oaks. The battle lasted only 15 minutes and involved fewer than 80 men. This event promoted Métis nationalism in Red River.

1821 the amalgamation of the HBC and the NWC resulted in an influx of families to the Red River Settlement.

1830 The Métis demanded more representation on the Council of Assiniboia, which made key decisions effecting the Métis population in the Red River Settlement. The council had no Métis representatives even though it was the governing body for the region. In 1839, Cuthbert Grant was appointed to the council.

1835 The Métis protested the HBC trade monopoly and demanded no import duty on American goods and requested facilities for exporting products.

1845 The Métis petitioned the governor of the Red River Settlement for recognition of their special status. Métis free traders and merchants became the most vocal leaders of this growing Métis nationalism. The Métis felt they had Aboriginal rights to the land. At this time, a regiment of British troops was sent to Red River because of the official fear of a possible Métis uprising.

1849 An armed body of Métis horsemen surrounded a courthouse where Métis trader Guillaume Sayer was being convicted for trafficking in furs, therefore opposing the HBC monopoly.

1851 The Métis fight and win a decisive two-day battle against the Dakota at Grand Coteau, just outside the site of present-day Bismarck, North Dakota, on July 13 and 14.

1857 The Métis case for rights in Rupert's Land was presented to the British Parliament by Alexander Isbister, a Country Born lawyer, who had taken up residence in London.

1869 The HBC sold Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada for £300, 000 and for 1/20 of the territory's fertile land without consulting its Indigenous residents.

1869 Jul.29, Métis leader William Dease organized a mass meeting at Fort Garry to demand that £300,000 be distributed among the West's Métis, Country Born and First Nations.

1869 Oct.11 Red River Métis resident Edouard Marion discovered government surveyors on his land and summoned neighbours and Louis Riel to stop them. The Métis challenged the survey of the area between Assiniboia and the USA until consent to do so was given by Red River residents.

1869 Oct.16 The Red River Métis formed the National Métis Committee and called for an independent Republic of the Métis Nation. John Bruce was elected as president and Louis Riel was secretary.

1869 Oct. 20 The Métis received news that William McDougall, the newly appointed Canadian governor for the territory, was 350 miles from the Red River Settlement.

1869 Oct. 21 The National Committee authorized the posting of a guard to stop William McDougall from entering the Red River Settlement. The Métis boat brigadiers whom returned to Red River for the winter provided the backbone of this Métis movement.

1869 Nov. 1 Métis military leader Ambroise Lépine commands governor William McDougall to stay on the American side of the border until the Métis officially negotiate the Red River Settlement's entry into Confederation.

1869 Nov.7 Governor William McDougall waited in Pembina until the legal transfer of Rupert's Land to Canada occurred on December 1st, 1869.

1869 Nov. 2 The Métis seized Fort Garry, which was the headquarters for the government of Assiniboia and the HBC. Fort Garry had important supplies such as canons, ammunition, and pemmican and fortified stonewalls. 500 people followed Louis Riel and the National Committee during this assertion of Métis rights and control of the region.

1869 Nov. 16 Louis Riel attempted to broaden the base of support of the National Committee. The Catholic Métis supported Riel but the Country Born were alarmed at Fort Garry's occupation. The National Committee Council formed at this time had 12 Country Born representatives and 12 Métis. The Council dissolves within a month, due to infighting.

1869 Nov. 20 Governor William McDougall received a report that Métis insurrection would last only one week. The Canadian leadership viewed the Métis political organization as temporary and short term.

1869 Dec.7 John Schultz, John Snow and Charles Mair plus other Canadian Party nationalists at Red River tried to overthrow the new Métis-controlled regime; however, most were captured by the Métis. They pressured the Country Born to support the Canada First Movement.

1869 Dec.8 The Métis formed a Provisional Government and created a newspaper called *La Nouvelle Nation/The New Nation*. The Métis wanted to negotiate to join Canada as a nation through an international treaty. They claimed the HBC abandoned their role of government by selling the land to Canada so they were acting as a legitimate government until the transfer could be completed.

1869 Dec.10 Donald A. Smith, (Lord Strathcona) a retired HBC employee, was sent to Red River as a special commissioner on behalf of Canada. Smith did not have authority to negotiate terms of transfer to Canada but he could report the Métis concerns to the federal government. He was also instructed to buy off Métis insurgents.

1869 Dec.27 Commissioner Donald Smith arrived by sleigh to Red River. At this time, John Bruce resigned as president and Louis Riel became president and reorganized the local government with a civil and military council in order to defend the colony.

1870 Jan. Canadian Party prisoners were released. Two prisoners, Thomas Scott and Charles Mair, escape to Portage la Prairie to plan an armed assault on Fort Garry

1870 Jan.19 At a general meeting at Fort Garry 1,000 Métis and 1,000 Country Born gather to hear Commissioner Donald Smith.

1870 Jan.26-Feb.11 A Convention of Forty is held with 20 English and 20 French delegates to decide the future political objectives of Red River. They begin to draft the 2nd list of Rights to be sent to Canada in order to outline their terms for entering Confederation. These are given to Donald Smith, and delegates were selected to go to Ottawa to present this list.

1870 Feb.12-15 Louis Riel released 16 Canadian Party prisoners from Fort Garry. Scott, Mair and sixty armed men leave Portage la Prairie to “free” prisoners even though the Portage representative Kenneth MacKenzie told them that the Provisional Government was releasing them.

1870 Feb.17 Métis horsemen under Ambroise Lépine captured the Canadian Party agitators. Riel used the prisoners to pressure the Canadian government to recognize the Provisional Government.

1870 Mar.4 Thomas Scott was executed by the Provisional Government.

1870 Mar.9 Archbishop Taché came from Rome to Ottawa to ask what he could do to create peace in the Northwest. Taché traveled to Red River and told leaders that the Provisional Government would receive a general amnesty from Canada as long as the resistance ended. Taché’s statement was made prior to Central Canada’s knowledge of Thomas Scott’s death.

1870 Mar.23-4 Father Ritchot, Judge Black and Alfred Scott left the Red River Settlement for Ottawa to negotiate the region’s entry into Canada.

1870 Apr.11 The delegates arrived in Ottawa for negotiations with Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir George Etienne Cartier. Upon arrival in Ottawa, Father Ritchot and Scott are arrested for the murder of Thomas Scott.

1870 Apr.21 Father Ritchot and the Red River delegates were released from prison because of foreign residency status, which protected them from prosecution under Canadian law.

1870 Apr.25 Father Ritchot became the Provisional Government’s principal negotiator. They agreed that the Red River settlement would enter Confederation as the new Province of Manitoba, have English and French recognized as official languages and provide the Métis with a block of land for a homeland.

1870 May 12 *The Manitoba Act* became law and recognized Métis land rights and contained provisions for denominational or religious schools in Manitoba.

1870 Jul.15 Manitoba became Canada’s fifth province without recognizing Louis Riel and the Métis as its founders.

1870 Aug.24 Louis Riel received a message that Canadian troops were approaching Red River in a hostile manner. He fled to America for his life since he was not granted an amnesty.

1870-1885 More than 1,200 troops, commanded by Garnet Wolseley, entered Red River in 1870, many of whom received military land grants in order to ensure Anglo dominance in the West. Meanwhile, there was a steady dispersal of the Manitoba Métis from Red River area.

1872 The Saskatchewan valley Métis petitioned for an inalienable colony of 1,800, 000 acres.

1873 May 3 John Fisher and ten others, on behalf of the Métis of the Northwest, sent a petition to A.M. Burgess, Deputy Minister of the Interior.

1873 Sept. 11 The Métis of the Qu'Appelle Valley sent a petition to Governor Alexander Morris with thirty-one signatures.

1875 August the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) forced the Batoche Métis to abandon their form of local self-government, "*le conseil de Saint-Laurent*" or the "Council of St. Laurent", while the Métis were trying to enforce the council's last edict, "the Law of the Prairie".

1877 September 19 The Métis of the Blackfoot Crossing sent petitions to Lieutenant Governor David Laird containing forty-three signatures.

1878 Canada's National Policy (1878-1929) – based on providing a protective tariff system for Canadian industry, completion of a transcontinental railway, and massive settlement of the Canadian Prairies – alarmed the Métis. The Métis wanted their outstanding land claims settled before outside settlement of their homeland occurred.

1878 The settlers and Métis residents of Prince Albert sent a petition to the Governor General regarding land rights with one hundred and forty-eight signatures.

1878 January 15 Settlers and Métis residents of Prince Albert sent a petition, with eighty signatures, to the Minister of the Interior.

1878 February 1 Gabriel Dumont and the Métis of St. Laurent sent a petition to Lieutenant Governor David Laird.

1878 August 1 the Métis of Cypress Hill sent a petition to the Northwest Council with two hundred and seventy-six signatures.

1880 The Métis sent a petition to John A. Macdonald, Minister of the Interior, with sixteen signatures. Additionally, the Métis of Prince Albert and Edmonton sent petitions to Macdonald with one hundred and two signatures.

1881 The Métis of Qu'Appelle Valley sent a petition to the Marquis of Lorne, the Governor General of Canada, with one hundred and eighteen signatures.

1881 March 4 The Métis residents of Battleford, sent a petition with seventy-three signatures to Macdonald, the Minister of the Interior.

1881 October 18 The residents of Prince Albert petitioned Macdonald with twenty-five signatures.

1882 August The Métis of Qu'Appelle Valley petitioned Edgar Dewdney, the Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories, with forty-four signatures.

1882 September 4 The Métis of District of Prince Albert and St. Antoine de Padoue, now Batoche, sent a petition with forty-four signatures to Macdonald.

1883 November 19 The Métis farmers and residents of St. Louis petitioned George Duck, the land agent in Prince Albert, with thirty-two signatures.

1884 May 6 A resolution was passed by the Northwest's Métis and Country Born to obtain Louis Riel's assistance in order to negotiate with Canada for formal title to their lands.

1884 July 5 James Isbister, Gabriel Dumont, Moïse Ouelette and Michel Dumas went to St. Peter's Mission in Montana in order to bring back Riel.

1885 July Big Bear and other chiefs met with Louis Riel at Duck Lake, however, they did not form an alliance.

1884 Summer Louis Riel held meetings with the English and French-speaking settlers regarding negotiation for provincial status with Canada. Riel was closely monitored by the NWMP during his reentry into the Northwest.

1884 Autumn Big Bear and his people wintered at Frog Lake, the home of the Woods Cree. Lawrence Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, severed rations to Big Bears' people. Vankoughnet was suspicious of Big Bear's association with Louis Riel.

1884 December Louis Riel and Henry Jackson drafted a petition listing the grievances of the inhabitants of the Northwest. The government responded by appointing a committee to investigate Métis claims and to make a list of those who did not take scrip in Manitoba.

1885 March 8 Louis Riel put forth a motion for the formation of a provisional government and bill of rights. Word reached Riel that troops are on the way to arrest him.

1885 March 18 The Métis took control of Batoche, and seized the local Indian Agent and other government officials.

1885 March 19 Louis Riel was informed that the Métis petitions would be met with bullets. Thus, the Métis immediately formed a provisional government. Pierre Parenteau was chosen as president, Charles Nolin was commissioner, Gabriel Dumont was general, French Canadian Philippe Garnot was secretary and twelve other Métis men were elected as members of the council.

1885 March 21 Louis Riel demanded the surrender of nearby Fort Carlton.

1885 March the settlers and English-speaking halfbreeds withdrew their support of the Métis Provisional Government. Louis Riel established headquarters at the Batoche church and demanded Major Crozier's surrender.

1885 March 26 Major Crozier sent a party of mounted police to Duck Lake. A scuffle occurred between the Métis and the NWMP; the Métis were victorious. Canada quickly mobilized troops to suppress the Métis resistance.

1885 Late March Poundmaker's people left their reserves and traveled to Battleford. Settlers, hearing of the defeat of Crozier, fled to Fort Battleford. The Cree plunder the abandoned houses and the stores looking for food. Two settlers were killed.

1885 April 2 Big Bear's war chiefs, Wandering Spirit and Imasees, persuaded the starving people to pillage the HBC stores at Frog Lake. Nine people were killed in the attack, including Indian agent Thomas Quinn, a Sioux Métis, and two priests and settlers.

1885 April 3 News of the Métis resistance reached the Onion Lake Reserve. Leader Seekaskootch helped the farm instructor, the Anglican missionary and his family to safety at Fort Pitt. Henry Quinn, nephew of the slain Indian agent at Frog Lake, arrived at Fort Pitt after escaping the killing with the help of First Nations.

1885 April 6 Fredrick Dobson Middleton, commander of the Canadian Militia, led troops to Batoche from Qu'Appelle. His strategy was to break the strong hold of the Métis resistance.

1885 April 13 Henry Quinn and two North-West Mounted Police constables were sent out to scout for Big Bear's camp. Hours after the scouts were sent; Big Bear's representatives approached the fort and asked that a meeting be held between the chiefs and W.J. McLean, chief trader for the HBC. Troops under Colonel William Dillon Otter left for Battleford from Swift Current. Major General Thomas Bland Strange headed for Edmonton from Calgary.

1885 April 14 A meeting was held in Big Bear's camp. Scouts stumbled upon the meeting and engaged the band. HBC employees surrendered to Big Bear and the police retreated to Battleford.

1885 April 15 Henry Quinn was captured and the Cree occupied the abandoned Fort Pitt for a while and then began their journey back to Frog Lake.

1885 April 24 Gabriel Dumont and Middleton's armies battled at Fish Creek. The Métis were located along the coulee of the creek and fired down on Middleton's troops, which resulted in a Métis victory.

1885 May 1 Major General Strange arrived in Edmonton and took command of the steam wheeler *Northcote*. The ship headed down river with its cargo of armed men.

1885 May 2 Colonel Otter attacked Poundmaker's camp at Cutknife Hill. The troops found themselves surrounded and retreated. Poundmaker prevented his men from going after the retreating soldiers.

1885 May 5 Gabriel Dumont and the Métis lowered a cable across the river and knocked down the stacks of the *Northcote*, which carried military supplies to Canadian troops. The Métis' guerrilla tactics were successful against the Canadian military.

1885 May 9-12 The Canadian military attacked Batoche and the fighting lasted for four days. On the last day the military charged, burned, and destroyed property in the Batoche region. Gabriel Dumont escaped to the United States. Louis Riel surrendered three days after the battle. Many Métis women and children hid along the riverbank to avoid capture.

1885 May 15 Louis Riel surrendered to the Canadian military.

1885 May 26 Poundmaker surrendered to the Canadian military.

1885 May 28 The Northwest Field Force attacked the Cree (members of the Wood and Plains bands) at Frenchman Butte. After five hours of fighting, both sides withdrew: the Cree to Makwa Lake and the field force to Fort Pitt.

1885 June 3 Major Samuel Steele's 40 scouts attacked a Cree camp killing four people, including Seekaskootch. Hearing of the skirmish, members of the main camp rushed to the site of the fight. After three hours at battle, Steele retired and awaited reinforcements.

1885 June 4 The Cree retrieved their dead from the westside of the ford and buried them. They headed north and crossed a second narrow. Big Bears' Plains Cree and the Wood Cree separated. Big Bear headed south and the Wood Cree continued north. They took the hostages with them. Wandering Spirit traveled with Big Bear but soon broke with the band and rejoined the Wood Cree. The hostages, including McLean, were released and they backtracked through the marsh and returned to Fort Pitt.

1885 June 24 McLean arrived back at Fort Pitt. He interceded on behalf of the Wood Cree and arranged for them to surrender to Middleton at the fort.

1885 July 2 After avoiding capture, Big Bear, along with his youngest son, Horse Child, surrendered to Middleton. Big Bear was soon tried for treason-felony, found guilty and sentenced to three years in the Stony Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba. He served two years and was released. He died during the winter of 1887-1888 on the Poundmaker Reserve in Saskatchewan.

1885 July 20 The trial of Louis Riel, who was charged with high treason, began in Regina.

1885 September 22 Wandering Spirit, who had surrendered with the Wood Cree at Fort Pitt, pled guilty to murder.

1885 November 16 Louis Riel was executed for treason. Métis began to disperse to the United States and other northwestern communities.

1885 November 17 Eight First Nations warriors were hanged at Battleford, which was the largest mass hanging in Canadian history.

VII. Métis Resistances Glossary - Leah Dorion and Darren R. Préfontaine

Adaptation: Process by which organisms develop physical and behavioural characteristics allowing them to survive and reproduce in their habitats.

Agency: The idea that Aboriginal peoples were full participants in their past, based their actions on own self-interest and were not pawns of Europeans.

Assimilation: The often forceful and deliberate merging of the members of one sociocultural system into another with the consequent abandonment of the former group's customs and beliefs.

Brady, Jim: He was an important Métis leader who helped to politically organize the Alberta and Saskatchewan Métis people in the 1930s-1950s. Brady was born at Lac St. Vincent, Alberta on 11 March 1908, and disappeared in the Foster Lakes area of Saskatchewan in June 1967.

Consensual democracy: Is a form of democracy in which concerned and voting citizens have their input heard by their elected officials in return of giving up the right to regulate society. Often, the citizens can determine policy.

(Pre/Post) Contact: Pre-Contact Period: The period in history before Europeans came into contact with Aboriginal peoples. Post-Contact Period: In the Americas, the period in history after Europeans came into contact with Aboriginal peoples.

Country Born: A historical term used to identify mixed-blood children of British and Indian descent, as opposed to the term Métis, which originally identified mixed blood children of French and Indian descent.

Cultural Relativism: An anthropological theory, which maintains that cultures are unique and, as such, can only be evaluated according to their own standards and values.

Cultural suppression: Outlawing and imposing regulations on people which forces them to practice acts that are deemed wrong by the dominant society. Historically government laws and regulations suppressed the Aboriginal way of life. For example, First Nations people were not allowed to publicly gather or practice their religious ceremony until 1951. In addition, game law restrictions have criminalized the traditional way of life of many native people.

Deconstruct: A method in the Post-modernist theoretical perspective which attempts to demolish oppressive and conformist ways of thought in society by emphasizing differences of groups of people and the inclusion of religious, sexual, racial and ethnic minorities into the culture of mainstream society.

Ethnocentrism: The attitude or opinion that the morals, values, and customs of one's own way of life are superior to those of other peoples.

Ethnohistory: Is a sub-discipline of history which attempts to be sensitive to the point of view of particular groups of people different than that of the historian writing about them.

Euro-Canadian: Is a Canadian of European background or a Canadian of non-European background completely assimilated in Euro-Canadian culture. This term is in contrast with Aboriginal or Indigenous-Canadian, which has a different meaning and worldview.

First Nations: are the original Aboriginal inhabitants of the country. First Nations are therefore different from such Indigenous people as the Inuit and the Métis because they inhabited Canada longer than either of these two groups. First Nations is usually used interchangeably with Indian.

Frontier Thesis: The frontier Thesis was a canon of North-American historical discourse, which maintained that the agricultural frontier of settlement shows the best traits of the national culture. Before European settlement could take root in a particular frontier a number of "obstacles" had to be overcome including the "pacification" of the Native peoples, the clearing of land and the creation of infrastructure. This theory and its Eurocentric moorings have been discredited, and scholars have tried to downplay its thesis of civilization clashing with a savage frontier. This frontier is "*...the 'westward movement', the expansion of European-American Civilization at the expense of both traditional societies and natural ecology. Such a history is at heart dialectical, a history of conflict, and as Frederick Jackson Turner pointed out back in 1893, the point of interaction between the old (the wild...and Indian culture) and the new (explorers, mountain men, and pioneers.) is the frontier*". J. Lyon, "The Literary West" in Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O'Connor and Martha A. Sandweiss, Editors, *The Oxford History of the American West*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, (pp. 709-44), p. 707. In the same volume consult Charles S. Peterson "Speaking for the Past", pp. 743-69, for a better understanding of how the frontier thesis marginalized Aboriginal people.

Great Man of History School of Historical Interpretation: In the past, Euro-Canadian historians generally wrote about political, economic and military matters. From the late 1800s until the early 1960s, the Great Man of History School was the dominant canon in Canadian historical writing. Rather than studying society as a whole, historians wrote biographies of politicians, soldiers and diplomats. Regarding Métis history, historians only analyzed Louis Riel and the political events leading to the two major Métis resistances. Social and economic factors, along with the concerns of ordinary Métis people, were rarely assessed. History was largely written from an ethnocentric perspective since the experiences of women, ethnic and visible minorities and Aboriginal people were either ignored or were portrayed inaccurately and a white male perspective dominated traditional Canadian historical writing.

The great man of history theory still applies to Métis history. For instance, popular historians continue to work on projects, which concentrate exclusively on Louis Riel rather than having a more thorough analysis of the Prairie Métis' historic grievances. See George Woodcock and Paul Chartrand, *Making History: Louis Riel and the North-West Rebellion of 1885*. Montréal: The National Film Board of Canada, 1997. This interactive CD-ROM is a useful resource, especially its biographies, photographs and primary documents. However, its Aboriginal content is limited to a few quotes from Métis leader, Paul Chartrand. Nonetheless, with this focus on individuals we are learning more about some of the peripheral people in Louis Riel's life including his friends and secretaries. See: Raymond J.A. Huel, "Living in the Shadow of Greatness: Louis Schmidt, Riel's Secretary", *Native Studies Review*, pp. 16-27; Donatien Frémont, *Les Secrétaires de Riel: Louis Schmidt, Henry Jackson et Philippe Garnot*. Montréal: Les éditions Chantecler Ltée, 1953.

History: Is the interpretation of the past events and people through the use, at times selective, of primary source documents. The branch of knowledge concerned with the recording and explanation of historical events.

Historiography: Is the study of how history and historical interpretation has changed over time.

Hinterlands: Are regions with little political power that are economically and politically controlled by another more populous region.

Institutional racism: Is the all pervasive racism in all of a country's institutions including schools, churches, political system, the market place and government agencies which consciously or subconsciously discriminates against a group of people based on their racial or ethnic background.

Manifest Destiny: The policy pursued by the United States during the mid-nineteenth century, under which they intended to take possession of the entire North American continent.

Manitoba Act: An act that created the province of Manitoba in 1870. The act guaranteed 1.4 million acres of land to and language rights for the Métis people of Manitoba.

Metropolis and Hinterland Theory: A theory, which maintains that a dominant political entity controls the economic system of another part of the country or empire. In the Canadian context the Québec City-Windsor Corridor serves as the metropolis and outlying areas such as Atlantic, Northern and Western Canada are hinterlands – providing raw resources to the larger population centres of Central Canada.

Michif: A distinctly Métis language based on a mixture of Cree or Ojibwa and French with a distinct grammar, syntax, and lexicon.

(The) National Policy: Adapted by the Liberal-Conservative Party of John A. Macdonald in 1879, this nation building policy was built on the following items:

- 1) Protection of domestic industries through a system of punitive tariffs on imported goods;
- 2) The construction of a transnational railway infrastructure to connect the disparate parts the new Dominion of Canada;
- 3) An immigration policy to fill the Prairie West with agrarians.

This first National Policy collapsed with the advent of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Nolin, Charles (1837-1907): Charles Nolin is arguably one of the most controversial figures in Métis history. His career as an agent provocateur has been long misunderstood by his contemporaries and by posterity. In the eyes of most Métis, Nolin's testimony against his cousin Louis Riel, was key to Riel's conviction of high treason and his execution in 1885. Nolin spent the rest of his life in penitence for his actions but he never could escape the shadow of his more famous, charismatic and better-loved cousin.

Charles Nolin – fur trader, farmer and politician – was born in 1837 in St. Boniface, Red River Settlement to Augustin Nolin and Helene-Anne Cameron. His French-Canadian grandfather, Jean-Baptiste Nolin, was an affluent fur trade bourgeois from Sault Ste. Marie who married Marie-Angélique Couvret, a *métisse* (Métis woman). Their son Augustin Nolin ventured to the Red River area in 1820, where he and his brothers became representative of the more affluent and politically conservative or “loyalist” faction of the Francophone and Michif-speaking parishes. The family supported the Council of Assiniboia's desire to have Rupert's Land annexed by Canada, which put them in opposition with the Riel's, Lépine's and Nault's, who favoured the area's autonomy within Confederation rather than under “English” domination.

Despite his and family's resistance to Provisional Government, Nolin became a member of that body in January 1870, after the Council of Assiniboia was abolished. Once part of the Provisional Government, Nolin quarreled with Riel over how the Northwest should become a province. This and his intrigues to undermine Riel's authority led to both his dismissal from the council and to his short imprisonment. His jealousy of his cousin was already pronounced at this time, and sensing that Riel had the confidence of most of the Métis of the Red River Settlement, he gave up his opposition to the Provisional Government's agenda. Relations between the two men were so tense that Nolin physically threatened Riel. However, a local cleric, whom both men admired, reconciled between the two cousins, Nolin apologized for his actions in January 1871.

He may well have made up with Riel out of political expediency. In 1871, Nolin ran as a candidate for Parliament but was unable to win a nomination. Since he was unable to get elected, he supported Riel's bid to run in the new riding of Provencher in 1873, after transforming himself into a Métis rights activist. When Riel's forced exile continued into that year, Nolin tried to become the Métis leader, but was unsuccessful. Nolin was also at the centre of much of the infighting between Manitoba's Francophone politicians. He supported Métis candidates against outsiders or newcomers, and like most Métis resented both the growing power of French-Canadian politicians, all the new arrivals to Manitoba, and the political isolation of the Métis within the “French” Party. The end result was a growing rift between Métis and French Canadian politicians in the new province. Playing upon this division, Nolin ran against a French Canadian for a seat in the provincial legislature, and won handily.

Nolin served in a number of portfolios in the provincial government of Robert Atkinson Davis. This was an important period of time for the Manitoba Métis because their land claims process was under way. This was especially important since large-scale Anglo-Protestant immigration to the region was altering the old balance, which maintained the stability of Red River society for half a century. He was also the interpreter of Treaty No.3 with the Plains Ojibwa, where he showed his sympathy for First Nations aspirations. In addition, he dispensed patronage among the Métis, who criticized the federal government's lack of assistance to Métis farmers. As a result of government inaction, he resigned his post and sat as an independent until 1878.

John Norquay, the Country Born premier of Manitoba, was also another rival of Nolin's, and the latter tried unsuccessfully to topple the former's government. Nolin's humiliation was further increased when he was found guilty of bribery and influence peddling. In 1878, to escape scandal, he moved to the Touchwood Hills in the Saskatchewan district of the Northwest Territories. Other, Métis from Red River, including Louis Schmidt and Maxime Lépine, followed suite.

In the Touchwood Hills area, Nolin farmed, traded furs and dry goods, and taught school to local Métis children. Not happy there, he moved to the St. Louis area in the south Saskatchewan Valley, where he operated a ferry service with Maxime Lépine. Secretly Nolin was organizing Métis activists, and helped compile a list of Métis grievances against the federal and territorial governments. In 1884, he supported Gabriel Dumont's, Maxime Lépine's and Michel Dumas' decision to bring Louis Riel to the Saskatchewan Valley to lead the Métis in their planned negotiations with Canada.

For the first few months of Riel's return to the Canadian Northwest, Riel lived with his cousin; the two were inseparable. Nolin was even an early advocate of armed resistance against the Canadian government. However, he began to distance himself from Riel and the other activists after clerics persuaded him to abandon the resistance movement since his wife was miraculously saved from her life-threatening affliction, reportedly through the prayers of nuns.

Nolin's role in the Exovedate, or Métis governing council, remains controversial and is a testament to his malleable political personae. His intrigues and his less than enthusiastic response to the council's goals forced the council to accuse him of treason, and he was sentenced to death. However, he reconciled with the council and was given the task of enlisting the Country Born to join the resistance and to deliver the Métis' ultimatum to N.F. Crozier, the superintendent of the North West Mounted Police. He betrayed the council in both endeavours: after the fighting broke out at Duck Lake, he fled, but was promptly arrested by the police. In exchange for his freedom, he agreed to testify against Riel and other council members.

After the 1885 Resistance, he remained in politics, and was supported by "loyal" Métis politicians. He became a Justice of the Peace, and became an Indian Agent at the One Arrow Reserve near Batoche. Reserve residents had little use for him and soon expelled him. His political career ended with corruption charges brought against him and his associates. He died in 1907 at Goose Lake, Saskatchewan.

Source: Payment, Diane P, "Charles Nolin", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography: Volume XIII 1900*. Toronto: University Press, 1994, pp. 770-772.

Norquay, John (1841-1889): John Norquay should be better remembered than he is currently because he was Canada's first Aboriginal First Minister. Norquay, a Country Born mixed-blood, was the Premier of Manitoba from 1878 until 1887. However, in the annals of Canadian and Métis history, those of Louis Riel have overwhelmed his considerable achievements.

A large, jolly and amiable person, who captivated audiences with his passionate oratory, Norquay was an extremely popular public official. As a civic-minded Anglophone mixed-blood he represented part of the old order of Manitoba, which rapidly crumbled as English Ontarians with their notions of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, moved into the province from the 1870s onwards.

Norquay was born in 1841 to John Norquay and Isabella Truthwaite near St. Andrews, Red River Colony. Norquay married Elizabeth Setter, another mixed-blood, with whom he raised three daughters and five sons. A descendant of a Hudson's Bay Company man and their First Nations brides, Norquay was raised in a typical Country Born environment: he was an Anglophone but could converse in French, and Saulteaux and he was a High-Church Anglican, who got along well with Roman Catholics. He also received a fine formal education, but could live comfortably in a traditional lifestyle. Like many other successful mixed bloods, Norquay had to face all sorts of adversity in his youth – his parents died while he was a child and he was extremely poor until well after he was married. As a young married man, Norquay supported his family by farming and by harvesting resources in the traditional Aboriginal economy, all the while teaching the young Métis in the various communities in which he settled.

Politics always fascinated him. He became a minister of the first Manitoba government, an appointment, which many felt was granted to him because he did not support the Louis Riel faction during the 1869-70 Resistance. Occasionally, he was the brunt of crude racist remarks by other members of the Legislature, but because of his personality and civility, he was almost always accorded the outmost respect. His political constituency grew throughout the 1870s when he served in the new province's board of education, a supervisor of the small pox quarantine, and a minister of Public Works, all the while championing the collective rights of the Métis and Country Born as pioneers of the new province.

After serving in two different governments, Norquay was made Premier in November 1878 through the support of most of the Métis, French Canadians, Country Born and moderate English Canadians. From 1878 until 1886, when his "non-partisan" but slightly pro-Conservative government fell, Norquay ran a successful government, which saw his province's infrastructure and population greatly expand. Norquay had to face intrigues, which attempted to break his Francophone and moderate Anglophone coalition, and he had a public row with the Dominion government over the construction of railways in Manitoba, which would have broken the Canadian Pacific Railway's monopoly. Eventually, his efforts to appease his constituents' desire for more railways meant a bitter political conflict with his one-time ally, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald. This conflict and the desire of Métis and Catholic-hating Orange (Anglo-Protestant) politicians, who wanted to rid the province of "Half Breed" governance, meant the end of his tenure as Premier. He was defeated in a *No-Confidence Motion* in December 1887. After a few months as an Opposition leader, and as an insurance salesman, he died. Sympathy poured in from all areas of the Dominion. Manitobans showed their respect to this remarkable politician and statesman by building a statue.

Norris, Malcolm: An important Métis political leader who organized the Métis in Alberta and Saskatchewan in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. Norris was born at St Albert, North West Territories in 1900 and died in Calgary Alberta in 1967.

Pangman, Bostonnais: Bostonnais Pangman was the son of the notorious but colourful fur trade bourgeois Peter Pangman. The younger Pangman was born in 1778 in the Saskatchewan Valley, near his father's trading activities. His mother was Cree and his father was a New England-born adventurer. Since his father was in constant travel as a North West Company (NWC) trader, he had little influence on the young Bostonnais,

other than giving his son his sense of adventure and ability to judge dangerous situations. He took more to his mother: she taught him about Indigenous lifeways. His father was a disruptive force in the fur trade. However, young Bostonnais had little interest in trading for furs, the buffalo hunt had him more enthralled than packing furs at a trading post. Even at 15, his age when his father retired, he was known as a "freeman". Already at this young age, his skills as a horseman and hunter were recognized by the NWC, which employed him as a provisioner.

Pangman was drawn to the rich bison-hunting district around Pembina. In 1812, he witnessed the beginnings of a struggle between the Métis buffalo hunters, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the Selkirk Settlers. Miles Macdonnell, an agent of the HBC, who fancied himself to be the future governor of the new Red River Colony, aggravated the Métis bison hunters by insisting that the Selkirk Settlers could settle on the Métis' traditional buffalo hunting grounds. For two winters, the Métis buffalo hunters provisioned the hungry and green colonists with bison meat. This ended abruptly when Macdonnell implemented his so-called Pemmican Proclamations, which were meant to preserve this essential foodstuff for the settlers. Macdonnell's proclamation unified the Métis buffalo hunters who saw it as a provocation, which they resisted with all their resolve. Pangman's determination was further strengthened when Macdonnell arrested him for bison hunting, which violated the intent of the proclamations. The arrest angered the region's NWC employees.

What was worse from a NWC perspective was Macdonnell's attempts to confiscate all pemmican produced by its traders. Macdonnell and his agents, including Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière – Louis Riel's maternal grandfather, were successfully enforcing the hunting ban: the NWC's employees were on the verge of starving to death. Pangman and the rest of the Métis then resorted to taking up arms against what they felt was HBC tyranny. Pangman and the other Métis "freemen" terrorized the Selkirk Settlers into leaving the colony. Pangman played the key role in ending tensions in 1815, when he helped broker a peace treaty between the HBC and the Métis freemen.

However, in 1816, this peace was abruptly shattered with the Battle of Seven Oaks, when the Métis, without Bostonnais Pangman, attempted to finally expel the Selkirk Settlers by force. The Battle of Seven Oaks did not end tensions in the region. The Saulteaux Chief Peguis and Lord Selkirk attempted to sign a treaty, which angered Pangman because he believed that the Métis were also an Indigenous people with rights to the land and its resources. It is believed that Pangman told the Saulteaux chief that if he made treaty with Selkirk without Métis input and consent, the Métis would forcibly expel the Plains Ojibwa from the area. Soon, he, along with the other freemen including Cuthbert Grant, stood on trial for their actions in Lower Canada (Québec); they were indicted, but were later acquitted.

Source: MacEwan, Grant. *Métis Makers of History*. Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie books, 1981, pp.7-13.

Post-Modern interpretation: Is a school of thought or theoretical perspective, which seeks to critically analyze traditional modes of thought, art, and culture. Post-Modernist scholars attempt to incorporate the views and input of minorities and other groups in its analysis of society. Regarding Louis Riel as a Canadian hero after the Canadian state executed him as a traitor is a Post-Modern view of the Métis patriot.

Savage-Civilization Dichotomy: anthropologists used The Savage-Civilization theory in the past in order to divide humanity into groupings based on a society's social, economic and political structures. European or European-derived industrial states such as Britain, the United States or France were at the top and tribal societies such as Canada's Aboriginal peoples were on the bottom of this hierarchy. Métis historian Olive Dickason argues that the savage-civilization dichotomy existed as early as the Contact

Period (1534-1666) in Canada. The ethnocentric primary documents, such as the Jesuit Relations left over from the early Contact Period obviously coloured Parkman's and other historian's interpretations of the contact period. Olive Dickason, *The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1997 See also: Cornelius J. Jaenen "L'autre en Nouvelle France/ The Other in New France", *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers*, 1989, pp. 1-12; Cornelius Jaenen, "Amerindian views of French Culture in the Seventeenth Century", *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. LV. No.3. September 1974, pp. 261-291; Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. This book is particularly useful in that the author argues that the French colonists and the Aboriginal nations of the Great Lakes region were able to achieve a rough amount of cultural accommodation before this region became inundated with Anglo-American farmers following the War of 1812.

Social Darwinism: A now-defunct concept based on Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. It postulated that human societies evolve, like humans have biologically. Hunting and gathering societies were seen as the least developed and industrial societies, especially those of Europe, as the most advanced.

Métis Resistance Fast Facts:

- During the 1869-70 Resistance, Riel wanted to capture hostages as a bargaining tactic.
- The Manitoba Act had many revisions.
- 4,000 Métis dispersed to the Batoche area between 1871 and 1884.
- The land around Batoche was held by the Prince Albert Colonization Company, which meant that the Métis did not have title to their land.
- Louis Riel ran for a seat for Provencher in 1872; in 1876-78, he spent time in Québec asylums; in 1881, he married and became a naturalized American.
- Gabriel Dumont wanted to pursue the fleeing Canadians at Duck Lake, but Riel told him not to because such an act would be "barbarous".
- The 1885 Resistance cost \$3-4 million to fight and ended up awarding a further \$3 million in civilian claims.

Questions and Activities:

- 1) What were the main resistances, which the Métis took part in? Why did the Métis take part in them?
- 2) Examine the Louis Riel exoneration issue. What are the arguments for and against exoneration?
- 3) What were some of the social science theories, which had an impact upon how the Métis were portrayed in past history books and in literature? What does this about past societies and their view of Indigenous peoples?
- 4) Outline other resistances by Aboriginal people against Europeans or Euro-North Americans. Are these resistances similar to than the Métis resistances or are they different? What common themes run through these various Indigenous resistances?
- 5) Have Aboriginal resistances changed the way that the European or American state(s) have dealt with Aboriginal peoples? Use Pontiac's Resistance (1763), the Red River Resistance (1869-70) and Wounded Knee (1890) as examples. Look at how these resistances started, how they ended and study the governments' responses to them. In the end, what do these three resistances say about the evolution of government policy towards Aboriginal peoples in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

- 6) Analyze the events of the Red River and the 1885 Resistances. How were these events similar and how were they different? How different was the federal government's response in 1885 than in 1869-70? What was the end result of this for the Métis?
- 7) Imagine that you are a Métis resistance fighter in 1869-70 or 1885. List your reasons for taking part and outline what your hopes for the future will be after the resistance ends. Then write a post-resistance analysis. Perhaps you are doing this from a prison cell or in exile in the Saskatchewan River Valley or in the Montana Territory. Indicate what went wrong and what went right. What were the Métis' achievements, what were their defeats?

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