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# Remembering Rebellion, Remembering Resistance: Collective Memory, Identity, and the Veterans of 1869-70 and 1885

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## Abstract

This dissertation analyses two of the Canadian state's earliest military operations through the lens of personal and collective memory: The Red River conflict of 1869-70 and the Northwest Campaign of 1885. Both campaigns were directed by the Canadian state against primarily Métis and First Nations opponents. In each case, resistance to Canadian hegemony was centered on, though not exclusively led by, Métis leader Louis Riel.

This project focuses on the various veteran communities that were created in the aftermath of these two events. On one side, there were the Canadian government soldiers who had served in the campaigns and were initially celebrated by English-Canadian society. On the other side, there were Métis and First Nations warriors who had resisted the state. They were largely forgotten by the English-Canadian public, but still respected and commemorated within their own communities.

This dynamic changed in the latter part of the twentieth century. After the last Canadian militia veterans passed away in the 1950s, they quickly faded from English-Canadian collective memory. At the same time, calls from Métis and First Nations peoples for greater recognition of their veterans began to receive more attention. By the end of the twentieth century, the narrative of the Canadian militia veterans had all but disappeared, but was not replaced in English Canada with a narrative of Indigenous veterans. The efforts of these veteran communities to promote particular visions of the past speaks to questions of national identity that still persist today.

**Keywords**

Canadian history, Red River Rebellion 1869-70, Red River Resistance 1869-70, Riel Rebellion 1885, Riel Resistance 1885, collective memory, social memory, commemoration, imagined communities, veterans.

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## Chapter One

## Introduction

> Most of us think that history is the past. It's not. History is the stories we tell about the past. That's all it is. Stories.
>
> -Thomas King, in *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America.*[1]

This dissertation analyses two of the Canadian state's earliest military operations through the lens of personal and collective memory: the Red River conflict of 1869-70 and the Northwest Campaign of 1885. The former was Canada's first military expedition, while the latter was the country's first war. Both campaigns saw Canadian militia march west to quell resistance from Indigenous peoples. In both cases, the resistance to Canadian hegemony was centred on, though not exclusively led by, the Métis leader Louis Riel.

The Red River conflict began in 1869. In the fall of that year, certain inhabitants of the Red River settlement – located in what is now Manitoba – formed a provisional government under the leadership of Louis Riel. This was done in order to resist the annexation of Red River by the Canadian state. Tensions soon flared in the settlement between those who supported the provisional government and those who supported Canada. As a result, a military expedition was mounted by the Canadian government in the summer of 1870. It was called the Red River expedition or the Wolseley expedition, after its commander, Colonel Garnet Joseph Wolseley. The expedition saw over 1,000 soldiers, approximately 700 of them Canadian, travel by foot and by boat from Lake Superior to the Red River settlement. The troops had ostensibly been sent to keep the peace, but once they arrived, Red River was anything but peaceful. Ill-disciplined Canadian militia picked fights with locals they perceived to be disloyal to Canada and likely even killed one man.[2]

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[1] Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2012), 2-3.

[2] Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 5th ed. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2007), 106 and Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *History of the Canadian Peoples: 1867 to the Present, Volume 2*, 5th ed. (Toronto: Pearson Canada Ltd., 2009), 92.

Fifteen years later, the Northwest campaign of 1885 saw Canadian soldiers march west once again to deal with another provisional government led by Louis Riel. On the Canadian side, over 5,000 soldiers and 500 Northwest Mounted Police were mobilized for the campaign, coming from as far east as Nova Scotia and as far west as the Athabasca Territory (present-day Alberta).[3] This time Canadian soldiers faced resistance from armed followers of Riel, who were mostly Métis but also included some First Nations. Other First Nations groups, initially led by prominent chiefs such as Poundmaker and Big Bear, also became involved in the resistance. The sum total of their armed followers, however, likely never numbered more than a few hundred. After much marching and several small battles, Riel and other Indigenous leaders were defeated. Less than four months after the first shots of the conflict were fired on 26 March 1885, all armed resistance to Canadian government forces had ceased. Canada's first war ended with Riel and other Indigenous leaders captured and put on trial.

These two brief moments in Canadian military history – 1869-70 and 1885 – are often relegated to just a few paragraphs in Canadian history textbooks. Nonetheless, for many of the people who lived through them, they left a powerful impression. This project examines the effects these two conflicts had on the people who experienced them, focusing primarily on the veteran communities that were created in the aftermath of the events of 1869-70 and of 1885. On one side, there were the Canadian government soldiers who had served in the campaigns. They became the focus of celebration and memorialization that was supported by various levels of government, as well as by wider English-Canadian society. On the other side, there were the Métis and First Nations warriors who had resisted the state. They found themselves largely forgotten by the English-Canadian public, but were still respected and commemorated within their own communities.

As some of Canada's first veterans, these soldiers are an example of how military service and masculinity became linked to an emerging national Canadian identity and to the identities of certain communities within the Canadian nation-state. This project considers the narratives constructed by these different memory communities and looks at how these narratives engaged and interacted with the wider collective memory of English-Canadians. To accomplish this, the

[3] Walter Hildebrandt, *The Battle of Batoche: British Small Warfare and the Entrenched Métis* (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites, Canadian Parks Service, Environment Canada, 1989), 15.

project analyzes "sites of memory" – such as monuments, texts, institutions, ceremonies, and celebrations – to determine how they define the political cultures of the communities that created them. The term "sites of memory" comes from the French scholar Pierre Nora (*lieu de mémoire*) who defines it as "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community."[4] Sites of memory make up the bedrock which collective memory is built upon. Scholarship in collective memory investigates how and why communities present events from the past, and how they mobilize a "strategically remembered" past in order to achieve present-day goals.

For many years, the Canadian militia veterans of 1869-70 and 1885 occupied a privileged position in Canadian society and played a significant role in the Dominion of Canada's early metanarratives. They were considered glorious heroes who had saved the country. By contrast, Indigenous veterans who had faced Canadian soldiers in 1869-70 and 1885 were largely ignored by white settler Canadians and were certainly not celebrated. It was only in some of their own communities that Indigenous veterans were remembered positively. Many Indigenous communities maintained interpretations of these two conflicts that differed from the rest of Canada. They often commemorated 1869-70 and 1885 as justified struggles to uphold their rights and maintain their way of life. Indigenous communities could do little to influence the wider narrative in English Canada, although they did attempt to make their voices heard in and around their home territories, particularly in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

In the second half of the twentieth century, however, English-Canadian collective memory of the events of 1869-70 and 1885 changed significantly. The Canadian soldiers were largely forgotten, while the Métis leader Louis Riel became seen as a hero by many non-Indigenous people in English Canada. Author Thomas King comments on how Riel is now a well-known historic figure in Canada while British General Frederick Middleton, who commanded the forces that defeated Riel in 1885, is no longer well remembered.[5] King does not speculate on why this particular story changed, but literature scholar Albert Braz does hazard a guess, arguing that Canada's soldiers were forgotten because Louis Riel replaced them when he

[4] Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Volume 1: Conflicts and Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xvii.
[5] King, *The Inconvenient Indian*, 18.

was transformed into a pan-Canadian hero in the late twentieth century. "If Riel becomes a Canadian patriot by opposing the federal government, what is the national status of the volunteers who battled him on behalf of that government?" Braz answers his own question, replying that "it is probably not an accident that the 1885 volunteers have vanished from the consciousness of Canadians."[6] Riel is arguably the most compelling character to come out of 1885. Desmond Morton notes, hopefully with his tongue at least somewhat in his cheek, that "In the seeming grey collection of bric-a-brac defined as Canadian history, a character as colourful as Riel is rare enough."[7] Braz states that the Métis leader's impact on the Canadian consciousness was "almost instantaneous," with ballads, poems and novels being produced about Riel even before the dramatic events of 1885.[8]

Riel has always been a powerful figure, but I would argue that Braz has the equation backwards, at least in part. It was not because of Riel that the Canadian militia veterans vanished – instead, it was only after the veterans vanished that Riel became a hero. Riel started out as a villain in English Canada and while many factors ultimately led to the change in how Canadian society has come to view the events of 1869-70 and 1885, it seems likely that Riel's shift from villain to hero would not have happened until after the last militia veteran of these two campaigns had passed away. The veterans of 1869-70 and 1885 provided the emotional anchor for what was initially a powerful story in English-Canadian settler society – the story of brave Canadian boys marching west to defend their nation and the Empire. Only when no one was left to defend the veterans and their memories would a new pan-Canadian hero finally emerge in the form of Louis Riel. The old heroes then quickly faded from public discourse, obscured by the shifting mists of memory. At the same time, this changing of the guard did not give Métis and First Nations veterans a much greater profile in English-Canadian collective memory. Aside from Riel and a few other leaders like Gabriel Dumont and Chief Poundmaker, the rank-and-file remained just as forgotten as they had been before. This is not to say the shift brought about no changes. In Indigenous communities the new sympathy for those who resisted Canadian hegemony did allow locals to commemorate their own veterans more proudly and publicly than

[6] Albert Braz, *The False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 6.
[7] Desmond Morton, "Reflections on the Image of Louis Riel a Century After," in Ramon Hathorn and Patrick Holland, Ed., *Images of Louis Riel in Canadian Culture* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 1992), 48.
[8] Braz, *The False Traitor*, 43.

they had in the past. Old monuments to those who resisted were restored and new monuments were constructed, sometimes with the assistance of local, provincial and even federal governments.

To comprehend how the memories of the veterans influenced English-Canadian collective memory of 1869-70 and 1885, and to understand how perceptions of these veterans has shifted and changed over the last century, one must properly understand the concept of collective memory and its place in Canadian and international historiography. Collective memory, also referred to as social memory, first received serious scholarly attention in the 1920s, when French historian Maurice Halbwachs argued that shared memories are constructed not just by individuals, but also by social groups. Halbwachs makes a clear distinction between individual memory and the shared memory of a social group. Shared memory is a framework used to make sense of the past in relation to the present environment:

> Collective frameworks are… precisely the instruments used by the collective memory to reconstruct an image of the past which is in accordance, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of society.[9]

Halbwachs identifies individual memory as an aspect of group memory, "since each impression, and each fact… leaves a lasting memory only to the extent that one has thought it over – to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu."[10] Of course, there can be variance and contradictions in individual memory – and so with collective memory. Halbwachs is careful not to represent the collective memory held by social groups as necessarily monolithic, or an authentic representation of facts. Historian Michael Kammen, in his book Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture, notes that scholars should not take for granted "the cohesion, clarity, and retentiveness of either civic or popular memory. Abundant evidence demonstrates that both can be sorely truncated or blurred."[11]

Those with a positivist approach to history might conclude that the fog-laden fields of collective memory are not worth treading. This could be one reason many historians have

[9] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 40.
[10] Ibid, 53.
[11] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 9.

declined to study it. Despite Halbwachs' early investigations in the 1920s, collective memory has only really come into its own as a historical field in the past few decades.[12] In recent years, some scholars such as Kerwin Lee Klein have warned against the overuse of collective memory. Klein feels "memory" has come become a catch-all term, often deployed with little theoretical depth or analytical weight behind it.[13] It is true scholars must be careful not to over-extend themselves when writing about collective memory. Martin J. Murray emphasizes one should not "treat shared remembrance as an object-in-itself, or a "thing," that exists outside of those who do the remembering." He also argues, however, that collective memories "are written in stone, carved into granite, and preserved in photographs."[14] Collective memory, when understood as a group of symbolic representations that communicate a community's understanding of the past, can still be a useful tool.

Historian Peter Burke argues that the study of collective memory - what he calls the "social history of remembering" - should indeed be of interest to the historian.[15] How a society chooses to remember (or forget) about an historical event can tell us much about that society and its values. Historian Robert Gildea, in his work *The Past in French History,* asserts it is collective memory – and not other sociological factors such as race, class or creed (or presumably, gender) -- that define a political culture. This is because "the past is constructed not objectively, but as a myth, in the sense of fiction, but of a past constructed collectively by a community in such a way as to serve the political claims of that community."[16] Gildea's statement does beg the question: Which community? Gildea has an answer:

> Collective memory is that of communities which have lived through the same experiences. That community elaborates a collective memory that is peculiar to itself and relatively impermeable to the memories of other communities. The memory of the conquered is different from that of the conquerors, that of the

[12] Oral historians Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson note in 1990 that "Anthropology and history have drawn much closer over the years; yet despite some fruitful theoretical borrowings, and with the important exception of African history, this rapprochement has brought surprisingly little change in historical attitudes." in "Introduction," Raphael Samuel and Paul Thompson, Ed., *The Myths we Live By* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1. Writing seven years later, Burke remarks that "The term 'social memory'... has established itself in the last decade" in historical circles. In Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 45.
[13] Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," *Representations*, No. 69, Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering, (Winter 2000), 145.
[14] Martin J. Murray, *Commemorating and Forgetting: Challenges for the New South Africa* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 3.
[15] Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, 46.
[16] Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 10.

> persecuted is different from that of the persecutors, that of the oppressed is different from that of the oppressors."[17]

Gildea implies that collective memories are not just passively accepted by communities – they are actively created and wielded as tools to help shape present political goals. Michael Kammen similarly notes that collective memories can be used by dominant groups to maintain their hegemony:

> traditions are commonly relied upon by those who possess the power to achieve an illusion of social consensus. Such people invoke the legitimacy of an artificially constructed past in order to buttress presentist assumptions and the authority of a regime.[18]

Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm agrees. In his article "Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," Hobsbawm describes how the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the creation of national traditions in European nation-states, the primary purpose of which was to establish the authority and legitimacy of nation-states that were no longer able to rely on old loyalties in an increasingly democratic society wracked with class conflict.[19] Hobsbawm's conclusion is very much in keeping with scholar Benedict Anderson's famous concept of imagined communities – the notion that modern nation-states need to be imagined into being through shared experiences that bond geographically disparate citizens. A shared past must be created, in order for citizens of the state to forge a shared present.[20]

The state's role in creating collective memory is certainly important, but a shared past is not just a Frankenstein's monster built by elites to serve national goals. The state is not the only actor invested in creating collective narratives about the past; within the imagined community of the nation there can be numerous smaller memory communities striving to tell their story. Historian John Bodnar states that "Public memory emerges from the intersection of official and vernacular cultural expressions."[21] While Bodnar's official culture has "a common interest in

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*, 4-5.
[19] Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914", in Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 263.
[20] Benedict Anderson states that the nation "…is imagined, as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship." In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Revised ed. (New York: Verso, 2006), 7.
[21] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992) 13.

social unity, the continuity of existing institutions, and loyalty to the status quo," vernacular culture "represents an array of specialized interests that are grounded in parts of the whole":

> They are diverse and changing and can be reformulated from time to time by the creation of new social units such as soldiers and their friends who share an experience in war or immigrants who settle a particular place. They can even clash with one another. Defenders of such cultures are numerous and intent on protecting values and restating views of reality derived from firsthand experiences in small-scale communities rather than the "imagined" communities of a large nation.[22]

Bodnar is describing fluid memory communities, where individuals can support aspects of both vernacular and official culture at the same time. Bodnar believes, however, that vernacular culture often clashes with officialdom, noting "Its [vernacular culture's] very existence threatens the sacred and timeless nature of official expressions."[23] Bodnar writes about America, but many of his ideas are useful when taken north of the border.

The veterans of 1869-70 and 1885 share many traits with Bodnar's vernacular memory communities. Bodnar's division between vernacular and official should not be adhered to too rigidly, however. Unlike most of Bodnar's vernacular communities, the Canadian militia veterans were remarkably comfortable with the past that official culture initially wanted to commemorate. In the wake of the two conflicts, the Canadian militia veterans participated in official commemorations, often using them to confirm and amplify their personal reminiscences. Métis and First Nations veterans who had fought the Canadian government were far less sympathetic to official state commemorations, but even this was not a given. There could be divisions within communities and it is also important to recall that shared memories can shift over time. In the words of historian Alan McCullough, "It might be more accurate to say that each generation writes its own histories."[24] The same past can often serve very different purposes for each new generation. Historian Norman Knowles, in his excellent book *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition & the Creation of Usable Pasts*, notes this phenomenon of different generations finding new meaning in the past while discarding old ones. He explains:

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[22] Ibid, 13-14.
[23] Ibid, 14.
[24] Alan McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance", in Gregory P. Marchildon, Ed. *The Early Northwest* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2008), 419.

> The picture of the Loyalist tradition that emerges is one not of an inherited artefact but of a contested and dynamic phenomenon that has undergone continuous change as successive generations and interest groups have assigned different meanings to the Loyalist past.[25]

What applies to the Loyalists also applies to the veterans of 1869-70 and 1885. Collective memory shifts and changes based on the utility of a particular past; benefits often accrue to particular communities and groups via such shifts in narrative.

The way Canadians use their past has much to do with the fragmented nature of national identity in the country. Scholars such as Robert Kroetsch argue that in Canada, official cultural expressions have often had difficulty constructing an overarching imagined past, in part because the nation does not have a single defining moment around which a dominant group can build a convincing common history. Kroetsch states that "Canadians cannot agree on what their meta-narrative is."[26] Scholar Jennifer Reid sees Canada as home to a large number of "subnationalisms," which can be said to be equivalent to Bodnar's vernacular cultural expressions. These subnationalisms are all struggling to use the past to justify their present, which makes it extremely difficult for an official national narrative to gain purchase in Canada.[27] Historian Cecilia Morgan, in her book *Commemorating Canada: History, Heritage and Memory, 1850s-1990s*, notes that this did not mean that memory communities never wanted to connect to a 'national' past. While many commemorators were primarily concerned with the history of their own locality, "they might also, though, simultaneously link those histories to that of 'Canada.' "[28] This is in keeping with Gildea's claim that such communities strive to achieve "the widest possible acceptance of its own… version of events."[29] In other words, they attempt to have their particular vision of the past recognized as 'national' history, often to the exclusion of rival visions.

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[25] Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition & the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 5.
[26] Robert Kroestsch, "Disunity as Unity: A Canadian Strategy," in Eugenia Sojka., Ed. *(De) Constructing Canadianness: Myth of the Nation and its Discontents* (Katowice, Poland, Ślask, 2007), 21.
[27] Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008), 107.
[28] Cecilia Morgan, *Commemorating Canada: History, Heritage, and Memory, 1850s-1990s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 5.
[29] Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History*, 341.

Regardless of the locale, those who wish to study collective memory must always ask themselves the following three questions presented by Peter Burke:

> What are the modes of transmission of public memories and how have these modes changed over time? What are the uses of these memories, the uses of the past and how have these uses changed? Conversely, what are the uses of oblivion?[30]

These questions reveal much about how the veterans of 1869-70 and 1885 have been remembered (and forgotten) and what they themselves chose to remember (and forget) about their own service. For many years, English-Canadians were generally inclined to view the Canadian militia veterans favourably and their opponents unfavourably. This was due in part to a narrative that depicted Canada as a conservative, counter-revolutionary society where the orderly growth and development of the white settler nation-state was paramount. Resistance to the state was considered rebellion and did not line up with a narrative of peaceful national development.

Rebellion does play a role in Canada's British Imperial narrative, mainly as a foil to be heroically overcome. Historian Carl Berger has written about the Imperial movement in late 19th-century Canada, led by Canada's "intellectual elites" such as George Taylor Denison, Charles Mair and G.M. Grant. These men believed Canada's autonomy and future greatness was dependent on remaining an important part of a greater whole: the British Empire. Historian Daniel Francis, meanwhile, has written of a more grassroots understanding of the imperial connection, noting that "Until at least the 1950s, students were educated to become citizens of an empire as much as to become citizens of Canada."[31] At the same time, Canadians in late 19th century were searching for "Canadian" heroes, both in their past and in their present.[32] The Canadian militia veterans of 1869-70 and 1885 were practically tailor-made to reinforce English-Canadians national and imperial leanings. They were ensuring the spread and progress of "British" civilization in the face of "uncivilized" Indigenous adversaries. Many Canadian militia veterans who served in both conflicts interpreted their personal memories of their service though

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[30] Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, 46.
[31] Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 53-54.
[32] In *Inventing the Loyalists*, Knowles notes that by the mid-nineteenth century, Canadian legislators were recognizing the importance of history to creating a sense of "national" identity. See Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*, 30-31.

this framework. As a result, they enthusiastically collaborated with government officials in propagating a narrative a British Imperial narrative.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the habitus – a set of structured dispositions that incline an agent to act and react in certain predicable ways – can be seen at work in English Canada's collective memory of rebellion.[33] Bourdieu upholds that a habitus is quite durable, and can remain strong for an entire lifetime or more. The durability of the habitus is evidenced by how tenaciously many veterans – both Canadian militia and Indigenous – worked to maintain particular interpretations of their past within their respective memory communities. In English Canada, old soldiers often protected the narrarative of the victory of progress and civilization.[34] Over the years, this whiggish view of our nation's history as a journey of inevitable progression from colony to nation has weakened and shifted in focus, but it has not completely disappeared. In his book *Divisions on a Ground*, Northrop Frye describes Canada as "…culturally descended from the Tory opposition to the Whig triumph at the time of the Revolutionary War."[35] While the United States celebrates armed insurrection as an essential part of its national myth, Canada has traditionally been associated with the less radical notions of peace, order and good government. Frye further holds that violence in Canada "…has been mainly repressive violence", wielded by the state."[36] Peace, order and good government is a trifecta that comes directly from the British North America Act of 1867. It is arguably the founding document of modern Canada, intended to provide a blueprint for a new nation. Historian Ian McKay notes:

> The document's great memorable phrase is, tellingly, "Peace, Order and good Government." The most powerful word in that triplet is "Order." No religious enthusiasms, no nationalisms, no Aboriginal revolts, no democratic debates, and no passions should enter into the heart of the Canadian political system. Its

[33] The central characteristics of Bourdieu's notion of the habitus are explained by John B. Thompson in his introduction to Pierre Bourdieu's work *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 12-13. See also Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), 170.
[34] Metis scholar Chris Andersen also deploys Bourdieu's concept of the habitus, referring to a deeply-ingrained colonial "habitus" which he believes shapes a racialized understanding of Indigenous peoples. This habitus is undergirded by social fields such as Supreme Court Decisions and Social Fields, the actions of which legitimate racialization of Indigenous peoples. See Christ Andersen, "*Métis": Race, Recognition and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 9, 22.
[35] Northrop Frye, *Divisions on a Ground: Essays on Canadian Culture* (Toronto: Anansi Press, 1982), 45.
[36] Ibid, 47.

> main objective is a peaceful and good ordering. If people want to make their voices heard, let them do so in order and in an orderly way.[37]

This phrase lays the groundwork for a national narrative centered on peaceful growth and development. It is a narrative that has surfaced time and time again in Canadian historiography. In the 1920s, historian Chester Martin saw the country's constitutional growth as "slow, continuous, and analogous to the processes of organic evolution."[38] Historian Carl Berger notes that Martin had no room for anything that smacked of rebellion against the state. Martin's ire was focused at the rebellions of 1837 and 1838 in Upper and Lower Canada, but 1869-70 and 1885 were likely approached with similar disdain:

> The most remarkable aspect of Martin's analysis of the background to the winning of responsible government was his complete neglect of the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada and of such radical figures as Mackenzie and Papineau. The rebellions appeared to him as unfortunate aberrations in an otherwise steady evolutionary pattern: the heroes of his history were the moderate reformers - Howe, Baldwin, and Lafontaine - and Lord Elgin, whom he called 'the most prophetic figure in the commonwealth.'[39]

Historian Arthur Lower also focused on constitutional evolution in Canada's history. The title of his 1946 opus, *Colony to Nation*, speaks for itself. Unlike Martin, Lower did see a place for violent internal struggle in his national narrative. Despite this even Lower focused primarily on the significance of the rebellions of 1837-38, rather than the later conflicts in the west. Lower claimed that despite their failure, the 1837-38 rebellions had "…struck a blow at privilege from which it was never to recover."[40] The conflicts in 1869-70 and 1885 did not draw such praise from Lower, perhaps because during those two times, the government's opponents were not white men, but rather Indigenous peoples. There was a strong consensus among early Canadian historians that white males were the most worthy objects of historical study.

Despite a diversification of Canadian historiography in the late 20th century, white males remain popular figures among Canadian historians, and the nation-building narratives of Martin and Lower continue to be widely used. In the slim 2009 study *Who We Are: A Citizen's Manifesto*, Dominion Institute founder Rudyard Griffiths takes up the constitutional view. While

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[37] Ian McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005), 55.
[38] Carl Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing since 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 34.
[39] Ibid, 36.
[40] Ibid, 121.

he gives a nod of the hat to violent rebels such as Papineau and Mackenzie, it is the reformers Baldwin and Lafontaine that he sees as the real Canadian heroes."[41] In fact, Griffiths sees the constitutional struggle for responsible government as a blueprint for Canada's future:

> If ever there was a period in our history that might be instructive of our own times, it is the early decades of the nineteenth century, in particular the ten years between the Rebellions of 1837 and the achievement of responsible government in 1848.[42]

John Ralston Saul is another example of a modern Canadian intellectual who has accepted this constitutional view of the nation's past, albeit in a modified form. In his book *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada*, Saul describes Canadians as "a people of Aboriginal inspiration organized around a concept of peace, fairness and good government. That is what lies at the heart of our story, at the heart of Canadian mythology, whether Francophone or Anglophone."[43] Using the concept of "fairness" rather than "order," Saul steers away from Frye's suggestion that repressive violence was a prominent feature of Canadian history. The shift leaves room for a wider scope than the constitutionalists, allowing Saul to synthesize Canada's constitutional tradition with the nation's oft-neglected Indigenous history. Even when order is replaced by fairness, however, Saul's vision is still one of peace and good government.

English Canada's "peace, order and good government" habitus clearly affects how early historians interpreted the conflicts of 1869-70 and 1885, but it is not the only lens through which to view those conflicts. Some Canadian historians have interpreted homegrown rebellion through an economic framework. Perhaps most famous is Harold Innis's *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*. In the words of Berger, "At every turn the tempo and direction of expansion, the very efforts of men involved in the trade, were depicted as reflections of inescapable and anonymous forces."[44] A succession of staple products - fish, fur and wheat - created the patterns of exploration, trade and settlement that ultimately shaped Canada. In this context, events such as 1869-70 and 1885 were barely worthy of mention. *The Fur Trade* only gives one line of text to the 1885 conflict, an then only as a time

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[41] Rudyard Griffiths, *Who We Are: A Citizen's Manifesto* (Toronto: D&M Publishers, 2009), 108.
[42] Ibid, 97.
[43] John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada*. (Toronto: Viking, 2008), xii. It is also worth noting that John Raulston Saul has recently published a biography of Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine and Robert Baldwin for the "Extraordinary Canadians" series by Penguin Books.
[44] Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 94.

marker: "Prince Albert displaced Fort Carleton as a base after the Northwest Rebellion until 1890…."[45] Donald Creighton also propounded an economic view of Canadian history, although he left more room for personal agency than Innis.[46] Several pages in Creighton's magisterial biography of John. A. Macdonald are dedicated to the 1885 conflict – a significant amount of space compared to Innis' single line. Creighton depicts the conflict not much more than an obstacle - albeit a serious one – to the expansion of Canada's political and economic dominion.[47]

None of this is to say that English-Canadian historians have been blind to the shadow side of peace, order and good government, or that there have not been conflicting interpretations of 1869-70 and 1885. As early as the 1930s, some English Canadian historians had expressed qualified sympathy for Riel and his followers.[48] By the 1960s, sympathy had turned to full-blown support as English-Canadians began to drift away from their British connection and seek a new core for their national identity. "As the decade's developments unfolded," Historian Bryan D. Palmer notes, "they did so in ways that ended forever the possibility of championing one Canada, with its Britishness a settled agreement."[49] There is no denying that, by the 1960s, the traditional colony-to-nation narrative was losing its hold on Canadian historiography. Writing in 1967, historian Ramsay Cook suggested the time had come to accept the fragmented nature of Canadian identity:

> Perhaps instead of constantly deploring our lack of identity, we should attempt to understand and explain the regional, ethnic and class identities that we do have. It might just be that it is in these limited identities that "Canadianism" is found, and that except for our over-heated nationalist intellectuals, Canadians find this situation quite satisfactory.[50]

Two years later historian J.M.S. Careless expanded on Cook's notion of "limited identities." While acknowledging that the nation-building account of Canada's past was not without merit, Careless argues that it "neglects and obscures even while it explains and

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[45] Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 348.
[46] Berger, *The Writing of Canadian History*, 211.
[47] Donald Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain*. (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1965), 417.
[48] Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada*, 40 and Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," 323. McCullough also notes that journalist Howard Angus Kennedy, who had actually covered the events of 1885, was publishing sympathetic pamphlets as early as 1928. "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance", 430.
[49] Bryan D. Palmer, *Canada's 1960s: The Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 21.
[50] G.R. Cook, "Canadian Centennial Celebrations," *International Journal*, XXII (autumn, 1967), 663.

illuminates, and may tell us less about the Canada that now is than the Canada that should have been - but has not come to pass."[51] The scholar insisted that he was not simply trying to replace "a success story with a failure story". He argued that English-Canadians did not uniformly share enthusiasm for the "Canadian dream" of British-style peace, order and good government:

> Accordingly, it might be worth investigating what their Canadian experience was, observing it did not greatly focus on Ottawa and the deeds of hero federal politicians, or on the meagre symbols of some all-Canadian way of life."[52]

Careless thought that looking into the "limited identities" of region, culture and class proposed by Cook would be the starting point for this investigation. This new focus bode well for conflicts such as those of 1869-70 and 1885. After all, they were directly concerned with issues of regional and Indigenous identity.

The trend of focusing on limited identities continued into the 1970s. By 1977, historian David Bercuson had edited and published a collection of essays entitled *Canada and the Burden of Unity,* in which he painted the federal government as a divisive force that has worked against the prosperity of peripheral regions:

> What emerges from this book is a picture of the power of Central Canada, manifest through the federal government and other "national" institutions, which has created regional disparity and imposed its own version of national character and ambitions on Westerners and Maritimers. This process has continued virtually unabated since Confederation and shows no signs of slackening.[53]

Whereas in 1969 Careless denied wanting to replace a myth of success with a myth of failure, by 1977 Bercuson was making no bones about declaring failure as a far more truthful myth than success. Canadian history was swiftly becoming a house divided, where scholars focused on region and ethnicity and applied Marxist, feminist, or countless other theoretical frameworks to very specific historical questions.

Concerning the events of 1869-70 and 1885, the new "limited identities" historians of English Canada in many ways adopted the earlier views of Quebec scholars. Unlike Canadian historians, Quebec has long had to wrestle with the spectre of defeat. The Conquest of 1760 and

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[51] J.M.S. Careless, "Limited Identities" in Canada," *The Canadian Historical Review* (Volume L, 1969), 2.
[52] Ibid.
[53] David Jay Bercuson, "Canada's Burden of Unity: An Introduction," in David Jay Bercuson, Ed., *Canada and the Burden of Unity* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1977), 14.

the failed rebellions of 1837 and 1838 loom large in Quebec history and are difficult to avoid. David Burke has argued defeat can be more challenging to forget than victory:

> It is often said that history is written by the victors. It might also be said that history is forgotten by the victors. They can afford to forget, while the losers are unable to accept what happened and are condemned to brood over it, relive it, and reflect how different it might have been. Another explanation might be given in terms of cultural roots. When you have these roots you can afford to take them for granted, but when you lose them you feel the need to search for them. The Irish and the Poles have been uprooted, their countries partitioned. It is no wonder that they seem obsessed by their past.[54]

Historian Ramsay Cook adds Quebec to the list of nations obsessed by their past defeats, remarking that "Each generation of French Canadians appears to fight, intellectually, the Battle of the Plains of Abraham again."[55]

Cook's and Burke's views seem to imply that Quebec historians are building an embittered national narrative around a series of mythologized defeats. Historian Michel Brunet, however, argues that nationalism in Quebec is no less (or more) authentic than elsewhere.[56] Similarly, in his essay "Forgetful of Former Care: Notes on the Past and Present State of Canadian Memory," literary scholar D.M.R. Bentley applies Burke's analysis to Quebec, but does not concur that memories of defeat necessarily imply obsession. In Bentley's view, such events provide a "constitutive" past - a cohesive founding myth. It is not so much an obsession as something that the entire cultural and intellectual community shares as a unifying past around which to build an identity:

> The provincial motto of Quebec, "Je me souviens," is enough to remind us of the importance of memory in securing the survival of cultural and individual identity. Without the memories of the past that are constitutive of cultural and intellectual continuity, there can be no fully comprehended present either for a collectivity or for an individual, and with no remembered past to define and direct the present there can be no planned or idealized future.[57]

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[54] Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, 54.
[55] Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canad*a (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971), 100.
[56] Michel Brunet, "the French canadians' search for a fatherland," in *Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Company of Canada Ltd., 1966), 47.
[57] D.M.R. Bentley, "Forgetful of Former Care: Notes on the Past and Present State of Canadian Memory" (http://www.uwo.ca/english/canadianpoetry/architexts/mnemographia_canadensis/prelude.htm).

In some ways, the events of 1870 and 1885 became more significant in Quebec collective memory. Quebecers equated the experiences of Riel and the Métis – their defeat and oppression at the hands of English-Canadians – with their own experience of English domination; the Plains of Abraham paralleled the prairies of Saskatchewan and Manitoba:

> By 1885 French Canadians had already to a great degree adopted the Metis Louis Riel as one of their own.... And where the Metis were interpreted by English Canadians in the context of imperial expansion, French-Canadian writers dealt with events in Red River and after in the context of the long-standing controversy between Protestant English and French Catholic in North America.[58]

Historian Doug Owram notes that this interpretation of events leaves little room for the identity of the Métis as an Indigenous frontier people. It left even less room for the identity of First Nations peoples, who were neither French nor (for the most part) Catholic.[59] He also notes that since the advent of "limited identities," the traditional Quebec approach to 1869-70 and 1885 has proven attractive to many English-Canadian scholars looking for alternatives to the constitutional model or to Quebec's Plains of Abraham approach to Canadian history. Initially, these alternative approaches were focused primarily around Louis Riel, with little attention paid to his followers or to the Canadian militia.

Riel was alternately seen as a champion of western regionalism, Indigenous rights, the Métis nation, and French culture and was even described as "a sort of northern Che Guevera searching for the people's socialist utopia on the northern plains."[60] Historian Daniel Francis notes that "Riel has emerged as an all-purpose hero who manages to be different things to different people, depending on what they want him to be.... his significance changes shape depending from what angle you look at him."[61] According to Owram, the most dramatic change was a shift in English Canada towards a French-Canadian point of view:

> Yet the most important addition to the symbolism behind Riel came not because a new meaning was assigned to him but because there was a reassessment of an older interpretation. It was the adoption and adaptation by many English Canadians of the long-standing French-Canadian belief that Riel had been

[58] Douglas Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," *Canadian Historical Review*, LXIII, 3, 1982, 321.
[59] Jennifer Reid also extensively discussed English-Canadian and French-Canadian views of Riel and 1869-70 and 1885 conflicts, as well as Indigenous, Métis and Regional perspectives, in chapter two of her book *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada*, 32-71.
[60] Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," 328.
[61] Francis, *National Dreams*, 114.

> defending his culture and language.... As such his symbolism became national in scope: while easterners may not have had much interest in Louis Riel's meaning as a westerner, they were very much concerned with the implications of his lesson to French-English relations in Canada as a whole.[62]

In his article "Images of Louis Riel in Contemporary School Textbooks," Claude Rocan reaches similar conclusion based on a limited comparison of how Canadian school textbooks from the 1930s and the 1970s treat Louis Riel and the event of 1869-70 and 1885. By the 1970s the French-Canadian point view was dominant in nearly all the textbooks he looked at from Quebec, Ontario and In Western Canada. In Ontario, the author noticed a significant shift toward the French-Canadian view of Riel: "To a certain extent, many Ontario texts have accepted the Quebec view of Riel as having been led to his death by bigoted Ontarians."[63]

None of this is to say that narratives around internal conflicts like 1869-70 and 1885 have completely ossified in English or French Canada. Also, recent years have seen several attempts to restore a narrative unity to Canadian history after the fragmentation of limited identities. A prime example is historian Ian McKay's much-discussed Liberal Order Framework. McKay's central argument goes like this: Canada is founded on a "liberal order" based on the ascendancy of the "self-possessed" individual – a term referring primarily to white male capitalists. McKay is quick to note that this "liberal order" allowed for the exclusion those who were not deemed "self-possessed," namely women, French-Canadians and Indigenous peoples.[64] McKay purports that Canada as a liberal order was (and is) a "project of rule," constantly striving for authority and legitimacy through means both persuasive and coercive.[65]

In McKay's model, Canadian history becomes the story of the liberal order's efforts to gain hegemony over alternative systems of rule. McKay defines the concept of hegemony, first written about by Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, as a "process through which a fundamental class… articulates the interests of other groups to its own." This allows that group to exercise "a moral and intellectual leadership" and to create "a genuine 'national popular will' as a

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[62] Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," 332.
[63] Claude Rocan, "Images of Louis Riel in Contemporary School Textbooks," in Ramon Hathorn and Patrick Holland Ed., *Images of Louis Riel in Canadian Culture*. (Queenston, Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 1992) 106.
[64] Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," in *Canadian Historical Review* 81, 4 (December 2000), 625.
[65] Ibid, 627.

fundamental aspect of its ability to rule."[66] The concept of hegemony is used by McKay to turn Canada's whiggish colony-to-nation narrative on its head. Peace, order and good government is no longer a founding principle of a great country – instead it is a myth used to legitimize the prevailing capitalist order. It a story that Canadians tell about themselves to justify the hegemony of select groups. In the light of the liberal order, the nation-building narrative of Lower takes on a sinister tinge and it is perhaps in moments of internal conflict – such as 1869-70 and 1885 – that the faults and flaws are most visible. McKay himself recommends both a study of the 1837-38 rebellions and a large-scale investigation of the "liberalization" of the west during in the later part of the 19th century – a project that presumably includes the 1869-70 and 1885 conflicts. McKay does not grapple with these events himself, however. His main interests lie with the study of Canada's leftist movements, beginning at the end of the 19th century. Earlier resistance to the Canadian state is left untouched.[67]

McKay is not alone in paying little attention to 1869-70 and 1885 and their wider role in Canadian history. It has been some time since a general history of either conflict has been produced. The events of 1869-70 at Red River have often been treated as regional or even provincial history – and perhaps for this reason, they have received limited attention from historians not focused on western Canada and Manitoba. Perhaps the most prolific writer on the events of 1869-70 is Manitoba historian J.M Bumsted, whose 1996 book *The Red River Rebellion* is still the most recent comprehensive account of the conflict. Bumsted has also published other works about 1869-70, such as *Reporting the Resistance: Alexander Begg and Joseph Hargrave on the Red River Resistance*. Of course, Bumsted is not completely alone. Other historians have tackled Red River from slightly different perspectives. George Stanley's *Toil and Trouble: Military Expeditions to Red River* includes a focus on the Wolseley Expedition of 1870, while Doug Owram's article "Conspiracy and Treason: The Red River Resistance from an expansionist perspective," delves into the mindset of the pro-Canadian camp at Red River and elsewhere in 1869-70.

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[66] Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 16.

[67] This is not to downplay the scope of McKay's recent work. *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* is a thought-provoking re-examination – or, as he calls it, "reconnaissance" – of Canada's twentieth-century leftist movements which expands on McKay's theory of the liberal order framework, while *Reasoning Otherwise: Leftists and the People's Enlightenment in Canada, 1890-1920* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2008), is an exhaustive study of the early days of the left movement in Canada.

For 1885, the closest thing to an overview of the conflict written in recent years is a 2010 biography of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont penned by novelist Joseph Boyden as part of the *Extraordinary Canadians* series – and the work is as much as artistic recreation as it is an academic history.[68] Ten years before that, Tom Flanagan published his still controversial book *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered*, arguing that the rebellion was chiefly the fault of the Métis and Riel.[69] *Loyal till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion* is a 1997 book by Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser that takes a different approach, focusing on the Indigenous perspectives of 1885. The authors make a strong case that most First Nations people remained loyal to the Canadian government throughout the conflict.[70] There are earlier studies of 1885, which attempt to provide – with varying levels of success – an even-handed overview of events. Chief among these are 1984's *Prairie Fire*, by Bob Beal & Rod Macleod, and Desmond Morton's *The Last War Drum*, published twelve years before that.[71]

In addition to these general histories of 1885, there have also been a number of Canadian regimental histories that discuss the conflict within their pages. Some are older, such as Lieutenant-Colonel's W.T. Barnard's 1960 work, *The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada: 1860-1960, One Hundred Years in Canada.* More recent publications include the 2005 book *The Ottawa Sharpshooters*, by John D. Reid, and Brian A. Reid's *Named by the Enemy: A History of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles*.[72] Brian Reid's work in particular is a fine example of this genre of history, being well written and with excellent attention to detail. Such books are useful reference sources, but contain very little analysis and are primarily concerned with the story of their regiment rather than with wider Canadian history. Other books have focused not on a particular regiment, but on a larger group of soldiers in the conflicts. This includes works such as Jack Dunn's *The Alberta Field Force of 1885* and Donald Klancher's *The Northwest Mounted Police*

[68] Joseph Boyden, *Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont* (Toronto: Penguin Group, 2010).
[69] Thomas Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).
[70] Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser, *Loyal till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion* (Calgary: Fifth House Publishers, 1997).
[71] Bob Beal and Rob Macleod, *Prairie Fire: the 1885 North-West Rebellion* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), and Desmond Morton, *The Last War Drum: the North West Campaign of 1885* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1972).
[72] John D. Reid, Ed., *The Ottawa Sharpshooters* (Ottawa: The British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa, 2005), and Brian A. Reid, *Named by the Enemy: A History of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles* (Altona, Manitoba: Robin Brass Studios, 2010).

*and the North West Rebellion.*[73] Walter Hildebrandt, meanwhile, has detailed the battle of Batoche in both articles and monographs.[74]

There are some scholars who have analyzed the events of 1869-70 and 1885 using – to a greater or lesser extent – the concept of collective memory. Most such works have focused on Louis Riel and his legacy. Owram's article "The Myth of Louis Riel" and Jennifer Reid's book *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State* are two prominent examples. Albert Braz's 2008 book *The False Traitor* approaches Riel from a literary perspective and is an important work in this regard. There are exceptions to this Riel focus, however. Darren R. Préfontaine's *Gabriel Dumont: Li Chef Michif in Images and in Words* deals with both the historical record and sites of memory that surround the Métis general. Préfontaine notes that until recently Riel has had a larger public profile than Dumont among both Métis and non-Métis, but believes this is now changing.[75] Meanwhile, *Bumsted's* article "Thomas Scott and the Daughter of Time" recounts long-running battle over the posthumous reputation of Thomas Scott, an Ontario Orangeman who was executed by Riel's provisional government in March of 1870. In the years after 1869-70, Scott's reputation as a good man or a bad man – which for many determined whether his execution was justified – became a pivotal component of the stories both the Red River Métis and the supporters of the Canadian camp told themselves about the conflict.[76]

There is little scholarly work that analyzes these veterans of 1869-70 and 1885 using the framework of collective memory. There is certainly no single comprehensive monograph comparable to Jonathan Vance's *Death So Noble: Memory Meaning and the First World War*, which explores the place of the First World War veterans in Canada's collective memory.[77] The few scholars that do deal with veterans and collective memory focus primarily on 1885 rather

[73] Jack Dunn, *The Alberta Field Forced of 1885* (Calgary: J. Dunn, 1994), and Donald Klancher, *The Northwest Mounted Police and the North West Rebellion* (Kamloops, British Columbia: Gross Publishing, 1999).
[74] Walter Hildebrandt, "The Battle of Batoche," in Gregory P. Marchildon, Ed., *The Early Northwest* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2008), 365-418. See also Walter Hildebrandt, *The Battle of Batoche: British Small Warfare and the Entrenched Métis* (Ottawa: National Parks and Historic Sites, 1989).
[75] Darren Préfontaine, *Gabriel Dumont: Li Chef Michif in Images and in Words* (Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2011), 2-3.
[76] J.M. Bumsted, "Thomas Scott and the Daughter of Time," in Gregory P. Marchildon, Ed. *The Early Northwest*, 327-364.
[77] Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

than 1869-70. This is perhaps understandable, given that 1885 was a more violent conflict and received far more coverage in contemporary media and later histories.

In her overview of commemoration in Canada, Cecilia Morgan briefly discusses some of the monuments erected to the 1885 conflict, but it is only a passing mention.[78] Perhaps the most prominent examples of studies of 1885 veterans and collective memory are Alan McCullough's article "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance," and C.J. Taylor's article "Some Early Problems of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada." Taylor also addresses these issues briefly in sections of his book *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Canada's National Historic Parks and Sites*. These works examine the federal agency's attempts to interpret 1885 battle sites in the face of conflicting and shifting memory communities, including those of veterans on both sides of the campaign.[79] In recent years some work has been published about specific sites of memory related to veterans. Russel Johnson and Michael Ripmeester's "A Monument's Work is Never Done: The Watson Monument, Memory and Forgetting in a Small Canadian City" follows the story of a single memorial erected to Alex Watson, a Canadian militia soldier who died in the 1885 conflict.[80] Meanwhile, in his article "Halifax's Encounter with the North-West Uprising of 1885," David A. Sutherland has written about the commemoration – and lack of commemoration – of the 1885 conflict in the city of Halifax.[81]

A significant portion of this work focuses not just on collective memory in the wake of 1869-70 and 1885, but also on the personal memories of veterans and their contemporaries. Studying what Canadians considered worth remembering at the time of the conflict – as seen through journals, diaries and popular media – is key to understanding later attempts at commemoration. Collective memory both shaped and was shaped by the individual memories of the veterans. Ian Radforth's 2014 article "Celebrating the Suppression of the North West

[78] Cecilia Morgan, *Commemorating Canada*, 76-77.
[79] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance", in Gregory P. Marchildon, Ed. *The Early Northwest*, 419-467. See also C.J. Taylor, "Some Early Problems of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada," *Canadian Historical Review*, March 1983, 64(1), 3-24, and C.J. Taylor, *Negotiating the Past: The Making of Canada's National Historic Parks and Sites* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).
[80] Russell Johnston & Michael Ripmeester, "A Monument's Work is Never Done: The Watson Monument, Memory and Forgetting in a Small Canadian City," *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol 13, No. 2 March 2007, 122-123.
[81] David A. Sutherland, "Halifax's Encounter with the North-West Uprising of 1885," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* (Vol. 13, 2010), 63-79.

Resistance of 1885: The Toronto Press and the Militia Volunteers" is an excellent example of a scholarly article focusing on perceptions of veterans during the 1885 conflict, this time through contemporary media representations in Toronto newspapers.[82] Historian Gillian Poulter, in her 2009 book *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Sport, Visual Culture and Identity in Montreal, 1840-85* also looks at media representations of both the Canadian militia and their Indigenous opponents in 1885.[83] Both authors offer insightful analysis of contemporary media messages, but neither Radforth's article nor Poulter's book delve much into the commemoration of veterans after 1885.

Books focusing exclusively on Indigenous veterans are harder to come by. Lawrence J. Barkwell's 2011 book *Veterans and Families of the 1885 Northwest Resistance* is a welcome addition to the scholarship focusing on Métis and First Nations veterans who participated in the 1885 conflict. Barkwell provides a detailed list of many Métis and First Nation participants in the battles of Duck Lake, Tourond's Coulée (Fish Creek) and Batoche, using both oral histories and secondary sources.[84] Barkwell's work helps us discover who these veterans were, but it does not study their memories of 1885, nor does it delves into commemoration. Scholar Myrna Kotash has also collected various materials about what has been historically known as the Frog Lake massacre of 1885 in her book *The Frog Lake Reader*. The volume includes eyewitness accounts, press reports, memoirs, poems, selections from novels and interviews with historians and Indigenous Elders.[85] Kotash describes the work as "More than a textbook or anthology of these voices" and states that the *Reader* "works as a drama of interplaying, sometimes, contradictory, often contrapuntal narratives."[86] Kotash also occasionally inserts her own views into the text, often expressing sympathy with the Indigenous peoples who were blamed for the massacre.[87]

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[82] Ian Radforth, "Celebrating the Suppression of the North-West Resistance of 1885: The Toronto Press and the Militia Volunteers," *Histoire sociale/Social history*, Volume 47, Numéro/Number 95, Novembre/November 2014, 601-639.
[83] Gillian Poulter, *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Sport, Visual Culture and Identity in Montreal, 1840-85* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).
[84] Lawrence J. Barkwell, *Veterans and Families of the 1885 Northwest Resistance* (Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2011), 1-2.
[85] Myrna Kostash Ed, *The Frog Lake Reader* (Edmonton, Alberta: NeWest Press, 2009).
[86] Ibid, x.
[87] Ibid, 188-89.

The conflicts 1869-70 and 1885 have also been remarked upon in recent wider studies of Métis memory and identity. In their work *From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Métis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to Twenty-First Centuries*, Gerhard Ens and Joe Sawchuk note that modern claims to Métis nationhood have been buttressed "by their military prowess during the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, the Sayer Trial in 1849, the Riel Resistance of 1869-70 and the 1885 Rebellion."[88] In his book *"Métis": Race, Recognition and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood*, Métis scholar Chris Andersen makes the controversial claim that individuals can only claim to be Métis if they have a connection to "the historical core in the Red River region."[89] Despite these statements, 1869-70 and 1885 only make fleeting appearances in both volumes, and Métis veterans of the conflicts are almost not featured at all.

Regardless of whether one agrees with McKay's liberal order framework or subscribes to a more whiggish version of Canadian history, it is clear that the events of 1869-70 and 1885 have made an impression on the collective memory of Canadians. What is more, how Canadians have remembered these events – at commemorations, in memoirs, through oral histories, in monuments, novels, plays and on film – gives us a glimpse into the hopes and dreams of multiple generations. It allows us to examine how our different memory communities perceived issues of nationalism, ethnicity, and gender, and reveals what kind of country they wanted create for their children.

Before proceeding, I would like to make some remarks on terminology. Throughout this monograph I have chosen to use the word "Indigenous" when referring broadly to First Nations and Métis people within Canada. There are many other terms that have been used in the past or are still being used. Some of these terms – such as the word "Indian" or "Native" have a colonial history and are considered disrespectful and offensive. Others words, like "Aboriginal" are still in use but are no longer preferred. In recent years many organizations, including the federal government and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, have embraced the word "Indigenous" – and so I am following suit.[90] I will also use the terms "First Nations" and "Métis" to identify

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[88] Gerhard J. Ens and Joe Sawchuk, *From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Métis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to Twenty First Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 112.
[89] Andersen, *"Métis": Race, Recognition and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood*, 6.
[90] Bob Joseph, "Indigenous or Aboriginal: Which is correct?" CBC News, 21 September 2016, http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/indigenous-aboriginal-which-is-correct-1.3771433 (Accessed 4 September 2017).

specific Indigenous groups. As with the word "Indigenous," these terms are commonly used by the federal government as well as Indigenous organizations.[91] The only time the reader will see other terms used in this work is when I directly quote sources that use such terms.

One other terminology question needs to be answered before continuing: What should we call the events of 1869-70 and 1885? For many years, these conflicts were widely referred to in English Canada as "rebellions." In recent times, as sympathy for the "rebels" has grown, different terms have come into use, such as "resistance" and "uprising." As the reader shall see, there has been much ink spilled over whether or not the Indigenous fighters who took up arms against the Canadian state deserve to be called "rebels." Academically, there has not been a clear consensus. Some scholars have continued to use the word rebellion, while others have adopted words like resistance. At least one scholar – Alan McCullough – has addressed the question by incorporating all three terms, describing 1885 as a Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance. I have chosen to refer to 1869-70 and 1885 as "conflicts" and/or "events." I also occasionally refer to the events of 1869-70 as a "crisis." This is an attempt to remove the value judgement attached to other terms. As with my use of the term "Indigenous," there is one exception to this rule: when quoting historical sources, I employ whatever terminology is used by that source.

I also wish to address briefly three of the limits of this project. First, the veteran communities discussed are almost entirely comprised of men. Women were, of course, present during both the 1869-70 and 1885 conflicts, but did not participate as soldiers. A small number of women served as nurses with the Canadian militia during the events of 1885, but very little scholarly work has focused on their story.[92] More importantly for this project, there appears to be little in the way of public commemoration of these women, or of the many Indigenous women who were involved, directly or indirectly, in these conflicts. Women did play a prominent role in commemorating veterans, however, especially in English Canada. As well, historical concepts of masculinity and femininity often affected how veterans were memorialized, and this influence is explored within this project.

[91] Ibid.
[92] Glennis Zilm, *Canada's First Military Nurses, Saskatoon, 1885* (White Rock, British Columbia: Glennis Zilm, 2007).

The second limit of my work is a focus on collective memory in English Canada and Indigenous communities within English Canada. The collective memory of French-speaking Quebecois is touched upon only briefly – and usually in regards to its influence upon English-Canadian collective memory. Francophone Quebec has its own historiography and its own monuments, separate from the rest of Canada. French Quebecers' perceptions of veterans are deserving of a study in their own right, and that work remains for a future scholar to complete. For the purposes of this project, I have included the experiences of Francophone Quebec veterans whenever possible, but my focus remains English Canada and relevant Métis and First Nations communities within English Canada. I will also note that while I did conduct extensive research regarding the collective memories of Indigenous communities, there is still further research that could be done.

The third and final limit I wish to discuss is the fact I devote far more pages in this dissertation to the veterans of 1885 than I do to the veterans of 1869-70. The main reason for this is that there are simply far less sites of memory connected with the events of 1869-70. Part of this has to do with the nature of the two conflicts. The conflict of 1869-70 did not result in any battles that might capture the public imagination, and there were few casualties. In 1885, English-Canadians were saddened by the casualties of war, but also thrilled to see white Canadian manhood prove themselves on the field of battle. The violence of 1885 captured the imagination of English Canadians more effectively than the anticlimactic ending of the Red River expedition, and the amount of commemoration of each conflict reflects this fact. There were also fewer soldiers involved in the first conflict when compared to the second. On the Canadian side, there were only about 700 veterans of 1869-70, compared to more than 5,500 veterans of 1885. The veterans of 1885 simply formed a much larger memory community, which allowed for more commemoration. The 1885 conflict also transpired over a far wider geographic area, directly affecting more people and creating the potential for far more sites of memory. All these factors have conspired to produce more sites of memory related to 1869-70 than 1885, and my dissertation reflects this imbalance. I have tried to include as much material as I can regarding 1869-70. I also stress that on both sides, many veterans of the first conflict participated in the second, and their memories of 1869-70 influenced how they interpreted the events of 1885.

The next chapter of this dissertation does focus on the events of 1869-70. I look carefully at the military traditions in both the Métis and English-Canadian communities and discuss how settler-colonial views of the Métis as less "civilized" caused many English-Canadians to view Riel's provisional government as illegitimate and his soldiers as bandits rather than proper military forces. The chapter further examines how Red River Expedition veterans recalled their service and how those who resisted the provisional government under Riel became heroes and martyrs in English Canada. The chapter also delves into how the Métis community remembered the occupation of Red River by Canadian troops, and looks at the heroes and martyrs the Red River Métis chose to commemorate.

Chapter three looks at the conflict of 1885, exploring its origins in the troubles of 1869-1870 at Red River. Numerous firsthand accounts are used to explore the experiences of those who participated on both sides of the campaign. Themes are identified that veterans – and the wider Canadian public – would return to repeatedly when they later recalled the conflict. The celebration of the citizen soldier by the English-Canadian public during the conflict is also analyzed, as are English-Canadian attitudes towards the First Nations and Métis soldiers. The memories of Métis and First Nations during and directly after the conflict are also looked at, as is the resilience of Indigenous memories in the face of defeat, dislocation and arrest.

The fourth chapter looks at commemorations of the 1885 conflict, up until the end of the First World War. In English Canada, commemoration of Canadian militia veterans began almost immediately after the conflict ended. Musicals, monuments and medals were all created to celebrate the soldiers' achievement in the weeks, months, and years that followed. Métis and First Nations communities, meanwhile, took far longer to create sites of memory for their veterans. When they did commemorate their veterans, they crafted a very different narrative from that which was dominant in English Canada. Sites of memory connected to 1885 are analyzed, with a focus on what aspects of the conflict each particular community prioritized as "memory worthy," and how veterans attempted to connect or separate themselves from an English-Canadian narrative of brave soldiers defending their country from a lawless and violent enemy.

The fifth and final chapter follows commemoration of the veterans from the 1920s until the beginning of the 21st century. As the political needs of communities changed over time, so did the narratives surrounding veterans. Many of the Canadian government soldiers spent their

lives trying to promote a nationalistic narrative of sacrifice for Canada, linking their cause to that of later conflicts such as the Boer War and the First and Second World Wars. After the last of these veterans passed away in the 1950s, however, they quickly faded from English-Canadian collective memory. By the 1960s, Canadians were developing a more sympathetic, less overtly colonial view towards Indigenous peoples. Louis Riel, leader of the Métis fighters who had resisted Canadian government forces, was becoming a Canadian hero. Canada's first soldiers, meanwhile – by then an inconvenient fact – were largely forgotten.

The disappearance of the white Canadian militia veterans from public memory did not mean they were replaced by the Indigenous veterans who had resisted them. The First Nations and Métis soldiers never fully entered the English-Canadian collective memory. Instead, they were always overshadowed by their leaders, such as Riel. By the end of the 20th century, white English Canadians were expressing far more sympathy for Indigenous causes than perhaps ever before. As well, First Nations and Indigenous leaders were calling for greater national recognition of their veterans. Despite these changes, it was only in the geographical heartlands of the two conflicts (in Métis and First Nations communities of Manitoba and Saskatchewan) that Indigenous veterans continued to be actively remembered as heroes and defenders of their people's rights.

The veterans of these two conflicts present a unique lens through which to view the fragmented and shifting nature of Canadian identity over the past 150 years. The efforts of these veteran communities to promote particular visions of the past – and the willingness of their fellow Canadians to accept or reject their narratives – speaks to questions of national identity that still persist today. In this way, the story of these veterans becomes the story of Canada. Each monument, each medal, and each commemoration becomes a contested space in which competing national and regional narratives challenge each other. Today, the veterans are largely forgotten, but the stories they told about themselves – and the stories Canadians have told about them – still echo in the darker corners of our identities. They are still a part of the stories we tell about the past.

## Chapter Two:

### Becoming soldiers: English-Canadians, Métis, and the Crisis at Red River

The 3rd of December 1869 was the day that Henry Woodington became a soldier. For several weeks the small settlement at Red River had been in tumult; on 1 December the territory had been supposed to change hands from the Hudson's Bay Company to the Dominion of Canada, but Louis Riel and a group of Métis had moved to stop this from happening. Concerned that their rights would not be respected under the new regime, they seized control of the HBC headquarters at Upper Fort Garry on 2 November.[93] Shortly thereafter, Riel and the Métis constructed a barricade on the main road into the settlement from the South, to prevent the new Canadian Governor William McDougall from entering the Colony.[94] The goal of this Métis faction was to create a provisional government and negotiate new terms of entry into the Dominion.

In response to this challenge to Canadian authority, on 1 December Governor McDougall had issued a proclamation authorizing Lieutenant-Colonel J. Stoughton Dennis to raise an armed force of men loyal to Canada and use them to "…attack, arrest, disarm, or disperse" any "unlawfully assembled" armed group, such as the Métis currently occupying Upper Fort Garry.[95]

Young Woodington had only just arrived in the Red River settlement in September and his primary loyalty was to Canada – as such, he was quick to answer the Governor's call. On December 3, he and eight other Canadian colleagues travelled to Lower Fort Garry – which was still under the control of the HBC – and officially enlisted in the newly-formed No. 1 Winnipeg Company of Volunteers, under the direction of Col. Dennis.[96]

Upon returning to Winnipeg, he was ordered to defend two houses in Winnipeg where the Canadians had determined to make their stand. That night, the Métis formed skirmishing lines outside the buildings several times; no violence occurred, but tensions were running high.[97]

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[93] J.M. Bumstead, *The Red River Rebellion* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd. 1996), 65.
[94] Ibid, 69.
[95] As quoted in George F.G. Stanley, *Toil and Trouble: Military Expeditions to Red River* (Toronto: Dundurn Press Limited, 1989), 57.
[96] Henry Woodington, Journal of Henry Woodington, 1869-1870, 5 December, 1870, MG3 B11, Archives of Manitoba, 7.
[97] Ibid, 9.

The Canadians remained on guard through Saturday the 4th of December, although Woodington was able to run out and tend to personal errands such as paying for his room and board. That evening he returned to the houses, one of which he and the other volunteers had taken to calling their "barracks."[98] On Sunday the 5th, there were fears that the Métis might attack during Church service and so Woodington remained at the barracks on guard duty. In his diary, he noted that two days into this new career he was beginning to feel more like a soldier, albeit a very green one:

> This is the first Sunday in my life that I have been under military discipline, and it gives me a strange though not unpleasant feeling. The cause of the strange part of my feelings is not being accustomed to military duties, and the true cause of the pleasure arises from a sincere love and attachment to Queen and country and a consciousness of being engaged on the side of right and justice.[99]

Woodington's life as a soldier was to be short-lived. On 7 December, he and his colleagues surrendered to Riel's Métis and became prisoners in Upper Fort Garry. But the fact remains that for a brief moment, he had embraced his new identity. As a soldier for the Dominion of Canada, he felt he was serving a higher cause – and through that service, ennobling himself.

Volunteer soldiers like Woodington played an active role in the 1869-70 conflict at Red River. Canadian volunteers were celebrated by many of their fellow citizens as heroes - and even as martyrs. Many of the surviving veterans of 1869-70 – both official and unofficial – took up important positions in Manitoban and Canadian society. Together they would create and uphold a narrative of brave and patriotic Canadians safeguarding their nation from an unlawful and violent rebellion.

Other communities connected to the troubles remembered the Canadian volunteers in a very different light – not as heroes and martyrs, but as unruly young men, prone to bigotry and violence. The Canadian volunteers were not the only group of veterans created by the events of 1869-70, however. The Red River Métis also had their own distinct set of heroes and martyrs – those who had served the provisional government under Louis Riel and resisted the Canadian takeover. Riel, as leader of the provisional government, was arguably the brightest star in the Métis firmament, but he was still only one among many. The Métis looked to this constellation

[98]Ibid.
[99]Ibid, 11.

of heroes to create their own narrative of 1869-70. In their eyes, the events of those years had not been a rebellion. Instead, the people of Red River, led by the Métis, had heroically defended their rights in the face of an unjust and uncaring Canadian authority, and thereby performed a great service for the liberty of all Canadians.

Veterans who had participated in the conflict of 1869-70 played a very important part in both these narratives; in the stories, they were the heroes who put down insurrection or protected the rights of their fellow Canadians. This in itself is not unusual – by the time of the troubles at Red River, the soldier was already seen as a heroic figure in English-Canadian society. Historian Mark Moss notes that during the late 19th century, "Most Canadians did not embrace the idea of a standing army."[100] They did, however, embrace the idea of the citizen-soldier. In Protestant Ontario, the role of the Loyalists in the American War of Independence loomed large, and their patriotism and sense of duty was celebrated by writers such as William Caniff.[101] Also celebrated was the role of volunteer militias in the War of 1812. The popular myth held that patriotic volunteers, led by dynamic commanders such as Issac Brock, had beaten back the American invaders and saved British North America from annexation.[102]

A vogue for volunteers grew during the 1850s and 1860s, not just in Ontario, but also throughout the Maritimes. There had been war scares with both France and the United States and many British North American men responded to this perceived threat by joining militias. On Prince Edward Island, for instance, the Island Volunteers, who competed in shooting contests against other provincial militas, became the source of much pride. Writing in the 1850s and 60s, the Island's self-appointed poet laureate, John LePage, composed several works praising the martial prowess of the newly-formed Prince Edward Island Volunteer Regiment.[103] LePage was not alone in his adulation of the militia. In his introduction to a poem about the Volunteers winning an intercolonial shooting contest, the celebrations he describe would not sound out of place after a modern sporting victory:

> As it was, the honor of bringing the prize away from both *Nova Scotians* and *New Brunswickers*, set the citizens of Charlottetown jubilant; a large bonfire was

[100] Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press, 2001), 22.
[101] Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*, 41.
[102] Moss, *Manliness and Militarism*, 35.
[103] John LePage, "The Island Volunteers," *The Island Minstrel* (Charlottetown: George T. Haszard, 1860), 31.

> improvised on the Market Square; and no such demonstration had been seen in the City since the fall of Sebastopol in 1855.[104]

It is worth noting that LePage's point of comparison for previous celebrations to match the Island's sporting win was a British military victory.

Such enthusiasm could also translate into British North Americans participating in more active service. In 1858, the British Army directly recruited a regiment – the 100th – from British North America for the first time. Upper Canadian career soldier Charles Boulton was sixteen at the time, but this did not stop him from seeking a commission by raising forty men for the regiment. His father gave him two horses and a wagon, an old veteran lent him an antique uniform and he engaged a friend to play the bagpipes. Thus prepared, he visited neighbouring villages seeking recruits and reported that "…I was the envy and admiration of every youth my own age who witnessed my progress through the country."[105] Boulton reports that he was successful in recruiting forty men and securing a commission. In total, the regiment numbered about 1200 – containing both French and English enlistments from Upper and Lower Canada.[106] Boulton notes that many recruits returned to Canada after ten years of service and some later participated as volunteers in both the events of 1870 and 1885. He felt it indicated "…a true military spirit in Canada," and linked this spirit directly, at least in part, to the United Empire Loyalists.[107]

Part of the appeal of the citizen soldier in the late Victorian era was all the pomp and pageantry that surrounded him. Moss notes that "Parading in uniform was a glorious way to demonstrate one's passion for country and one's acceptance of martial values." Moss holds that the militia was an important, if not completely unique, construction of masculinity in Canada:

> Like firefighters and sports teams, a militia unit was an all-male fraternity, an exclusively male bastion that reaffirmed one's manly status at a time when more and more women were entering the workforce, and it provided an opportunity to socialize with like-minded men.[108]

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[104] LePage, "Shooting at Sussex Vale," *Island Minstrel*, 125.
[105] Charles Boulton, *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellions with a Record of the Raising of Her Majesty's 100th Regiment in Canada* (Toronto: The Grip Printing and Publishing Co., 1886), 15.
[106] Ibid, 16.
[107] Ibid, 35-37.
[108] Moss, *Manliness and Militarism*, 33.

Given this context, it is not surprising that Henry Woodington took so readily to the ideals, if not the reality, of militia service.

While the Métis were perhaps not as prone to the same militarism as Canadian society, they were not immune to it, either. As the crisis in the Red River settlement unfolded, the Métis also deployed the language of military bravado to legitimize their actions. Henry Woodington records that after surrendering, he and his fellow volunteers were marched out of the "barracks" between two files of armed Métis presenting fixed bayonets. They were escorted to Upper Fort Garry and imprisoned in one of the buildings, "…after which a salute was fired."[109] Woodington's adversaries had a martial tradition of their own. The Battle of Seven Oaks - in which a force of Métis had defeated a group of white settlers - had taken place over fifty-three years earlier in 1816 and held a central place in the identity of the Red River Métis.[110] Woodington's captors were trying to behave as a legitimate government, worthy of negotiating with the dominion as equals – and any government worthy of the name was expected to wield its monopoly on the use of force in an organized and dignified manner. The Métis were trying to beat the Canadians at their own game of playing soldier.

For many years afterwards, interpretations of the events of 1869-70 in the English-Canadian, French and Métis communities would hinge heavily on the perceived legitimacy – or illegitimacy – of Riel's provisional government. Most English-Canadian historians and pundits would see the provisional government as rebels who had usurped the rightful authority, while the

[109] Henry Woodington, Journal of Henry Woodington, 14.

[110] Darren R. Préfontaine, Leah Dorion, Patrick Young and Shelly Farrell Racette, *Métis Identity* (Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2003), 10, http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/00726 (accessed 26 June 2016). See also Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 80. There is considerable debate among scholars as to the actual significance of the Battle of Seven Oaks and whether or not it was *the* formative event in the creation of Métis identity, but it is agreed it was not without importance. See pages 161-167 in Darren O'Toole, "From Entity to Identity to Nation: The Ethnogensis of the Wiisakodewininiwag (Bois- Brûlé) Reconsidered," in Christopher Adams, Gregg Dahl & Ian Peach, Ed., *Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law & Politics* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013), 143-203, and Andersen, *Métis: Race, Recognition and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood*, 123-124. Also of interest is Parks Canada's interpretation of the battle as seen around the Seven Oaks Monument in Winnipeg – while one panel states that "The Battle of Seven Oaks became a defining moment in the history of the Red River Métis", it immediately qualifies this statement, remarking "The battle did not create a sense of Métis nationhood; it was an expression of that identity, which had been growing for many years and would continue to grow."

majority of French and Métis writers would perceive a lawful government that represented the will of the inhabitants. [111]

The legitimate/illegitimate dichotomy began at the source - with those who had experienced the events of 1869-1870. Woodington referred to the Métis as rebels in his diary, but he was not alone. The Reverend R.G. MacBeth was present for the troubles but was only ten years of age at the time. Writing many years later in 1898, he would recall the Métis as misguided rebels, stating that they "…were not satisfied with a course that seemed to them to place their rights in jeopardy, and so they rose up in a revolt that, alas… left its red stream across the page of our history." [112] MacBeth's judgment contained large dollops of patronizing racism. He described the Red River Métis as "…warlike in disposition, accustomed to passages at arms with any who would cross their path, and withal, as a class, less well-informed on current events than their white brethren…."[113] J. Jones Bell, an officer in the Red River expedition, would make nearly identical declarations about the Métis, calling them "…more excitable in disposition, ready to fight with any who might cross their path or interfere with their rights and, as a class, not so well-informed on current events, and more ready to follow their leaders".[114] Bell had almost certainly read MacBeth's account – he borrowed a sketch of Riel from MacBeth's book – but it was not only MacBeth and his readers who saw the Métis as more excitable and violent in their nature.

Charles Boulton, who had returned to British North America and was assisting Lieutenant-Colonel Dennis in recruiting, also saw the Métis as unlawful rebels. In his own memoirs, published in 1886, he stated that "Canadians naturally looked upon the act of *insurrection* as a breach of faith."[115] Boulton saw the Métis as easily misled, in this case by the wily Riel, who held a "…personal sway over them."[116] Speaking of the Canadian party in Red River, of which Woodington and his colleagues were a part, historian Doug Owram has argued that their actions in 1869 and 1870 were motivated "…by a fear that others were manipulating

[111] Doug Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," 319-322.
[112] R.G. MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West: Being the Reminiscences of an Eye-Witness* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1898), 31.
[113] Ibid.
[114] J. Jones Bell, "The Red River Expedition," *The Canadian Magazine*, in Ontario Historical Society fonds, Ontario Historical Society scrapbooks, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, MU5442, Archives of Ontario, 23.
[115] Charles Boulton, *Reminiscences*, 70.
[116] Ibid.

these people [the Métis] for conspiratorial ends."[117] Riel was one possible puppet master, but the Canadian party also suspected American annexationists, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Catholic Church. Owram notes that it all fit a bit too conveniently into the expansionists' worldview, stating "Only by portraying the Métis as puppets in the hands of artful manipulators… were they able to find an explanation satisfactory to their own suppositions." [118]

In this the expansionists were very much in keeping with a settler-colonial mindset that found it nearly impossible to imagine non-whites as independent actors in the drama unfolding at Red River. They were not perceived as being capable of seizing power for themselves. Historian Michel Rolph-Trouillot discusses this colonial habitus in relation to the Haitian Revolution and explains why it took the French so long to accept that a revolution – and not simply an isolated slave revolt – was underway. His words sound eerily similar to Owram's examination of the psyche of the expansionists:

> Yet even then… planters, administrators, politicians, or ideologues found explanations that forced the rebellion back within their worldview, shoving the facts into the proper order of discourse. Since blacks could not have generated such a massive endeavor, the insurrection became an unfortunate repercussion of planters' miscalculations…. It was not supported by a majority of the slave population. It was due to outside agitators. It was the unforeseen consequence of various conspiracies connived by non-slaves. Every party chose its favorite enemy as the most likely conspirator behind the slave uprising.[119]

In a mirror reflection of Trouillot's conclusions, Owram notes that the expansionists initially predicted the insurrection at Red River could not possibly last more than a week, and clung to the belief that the majority of the population at Red River was actively in favour of annexation, despite evidence to the contrary. The expansionists were simply "…unable to accept the arguments of the rebels at face value."[120] There had to be someone or something else behind the uprising.

The Métis, meanwhile, argued that they were neither misled nor were they rebellious. Writing in 1913, Archbishop of St. Boniface Adélard Langevin would state in a letter to a

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[117] Doug Owram, "Conspiracy and Treason": The Red River Resistance from an expansionist perspective," in Gregory P. Machildon, ed., *The Early Northwest* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre 2008), 306.
[118] Ibid, 312-313.
[119] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1995), 91-92.
[120] Owram, "Conspiracy and Treason", 311.

colleague that the actions of Riel and the Métis "…n'a pas été une rebellion mais un movement legitime en 1870."[121] This would be the official line of the Red River Métis and their allies in the Catholic Church for many years to come; that Riel had led a legitimate movement meant to protect the rights of everyone at the Red River settlement.

Regardless of the intentions of each faction, by December the situation in the settlement had almost boiled over, stopping just short of bloodshed with the surrender of Woodington and his Canadian comrades-in-arms. The imprisonment of the Canadians did not bring to an end the new vogue for soldiering that had gripped Red River, however. On December 8th, after only one night in prison, Woodington reported a rumor that he and the other prisoners were to be "…marched across the lines to Pembina."[122] The language suggested a war with a visible front line, rather than the largely empty expanse of prairie that actually stretched south of the Red River settlement.

As December 1869 bled into January of 1870, Woodington and the other prisoners became less hopeful that they would be released. On 4 January, Woodington records that nine prisoners were freed after either swearing allegiance to the provisional government or swearing to leave the settlement and not return. More took the oath on the 6 January.[123] Woodington was not interested in taking any oaths. Like a good soldier, he had been plotting his escape for some time, along with a number of his colleagues. They were using jackknifes to slowly cut away around the bars in the windows of their rooms. The work was done slowly for fear of spies in their ranks, but finally on the night of Sunday 9 January, Woodington and three others made their escape. They wrenched out the window frame, crawled through the hole and then climbed over the palisade to freedom. Clambering over the wall alongside Woodington was one Thomas Scott.[124] Woodington's diary ends shortly after his escape, so the details of his participation – or lack of participation – in subsequent events are lost to history. Scott's fate is much better known.

After his escape, Scott made his way to Portage La Prairie and tried his hand at soldiering one more time. On 14 February, he joined an expedition to free the remaining prisoners held at

[121] Adélard Langevin to Mgr Mathieu, Évêque de Régina, 5 February 1913, Corporation archiépiscopale catholique romaine de Saint-Boniface, Série Adélard Langevin, Box 153, Volume 17, Centre du Patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface, 63.
[122] Henry Woodington, Journal of Henry Woodington, 14.
[123] Ibid, 19-20.
[124] Ibid, 27.

Upper Fort Garry by Riel's provisional government. Charles Boulton agreed to lead the expedition, but would later claim he did it only reluctantly. Writing in 1886, he would say, "I felt it my duty to accompany them, and endeavour to keep them to the legitimate object for which they had been organized."[125] As time went by, even supporters perceived the behavior of the Canadian party as brash and dangerous. MacBeth, writing in the 1890s, noted that

> there were attempts made against the rebels, as we have already implied, but although the men who engaged in them doubtless meant well, it has scarcely required the after-light of twenty-five years to show that these attempts did more harm than good.[126]

Perhaps for this reason, the military nature of the Portage expedition has been somewhat downplayed by supporters. Boulton noted that many of the men involved were "…lightly armed… having only oak clubs."[127] MacBeth, who saw the men of the Expedition when they arrived in Kildonan, states that "As an example of the kind of arms some of the loyalist settlers were provided with, I myself say more than one man… armed only with a bludgeon weighted with lead…."[128] Despite this, it seems likely that the expedition, initially at least, did see itself as a military operation. Boulton notes that he was elected captain and officers were appointed. As well, prisoners were taken along the march – an act more commonly associated with a military force.[129] Boulton records that some of the settlers in Kildonan were dismayed upon seeing the Portage Expedition arrive in the community. They felt that a peaceful solution was close to being reached, "…but the appearance of another armed force on the scene cast all their hopes to the wind."[130]

These fears did not prove unfounded – on the same day as the expedition arrived in Kildonan, there was a fatal incident. A prisoner of the Canadian Party named Parisien shot and killed a local settler named Hugh John Sutherland while attempting to escape. Parisien was himself beaten in retaliation and likely died of his wounds several weeks later. The incident, combined with the fact that Riel released the prisoners that the Portage expedition had ostensibly

[125] Charles Boulton, *Reminiscences*, 101.
[126] MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West*, 51.
[127] Boulton, *Reminiscences*, 101-102.
[128] MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West*, 51.
[129] Boulton, *Reminiscences*, 102.
[130] Ibid, 105.

been organized to rescue, convinced Boulton and his "troops" to end the mission and attempt a march back to Portage La Prairie.[131]

Many in the expedition never reached their final destination. As part of Boulton's party passed about a mile and a half from Lower Fort Garry, they were approached by a group of mounted and armed Métis taken back to the Fort as prisoners.[132] Riel first threatened to execute Boulton, presumably for his role as leader of the expedition, but changed his mind after entreaties for mercy from community members.[133] Soon after, Thomas Scott, who had escaped from Fort Garry alongside Woodington back on 9 January, found himself sentenced to death by Riel's provisional government. Unlike Boulton, there would be no reprieve for Scott. On 4 March, the young man was executed by a firing squad outside the walls of Fort Garry.[134] The *New Nation*, a voice for the provisional government, called it the "…first military execution ever witnessed in Rupert's Land" and identified the deceased man as "Private T. Scott."[135]

In killing Scott, Riel's provisional government had given the Canadian Party a ready-made martyr. Sutherland's death had been tragic, but was an accident – and it could be argued it had been caused in part, however unintentionally, by the aggressive actions of the Portage expedition itself. Scott, in contrast, had been deliberately executed. Advocates of annexation immediately began to use the death as a tool to fans the flames of anti-Catholic and anti-French sentiment in Ontario. Canada Firster George Denison would later write that "…it was like putting a match to tinder." Large demonstrations were held in cities such as Toronto condemning "the murderer Riel."[136] Such Anti-Catholic sentiment was certainly not without precedent in the province. After the Fenian raid into Ontario in 1866, wild rumors had circulated that Catholics in the province would rise up with the Fenians to murder Protestants in their beds on Christmas eve.[137]

In the coming years, almost everything about Thomas Scott and his execution would be mythologized. As Historian J.M. Bumsted notes, "the details of the death of Scott were, from

[131] Bumsted, *The Red River Rebellion*, 153-154.
[132] Boulton, *Reminiscences*, 114-115.
[133] Bumsted, *The Red River Rebellion*, 158-160.
[134] Ibid, 165.
[135] "The Execution of Scott, From the Winnipeg New Nation, March 4th" as quoted in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 169.
[136] Bumsted, *The Red River Rebellion*, 171.
[137] Donald B. Smith, *Honoré Jaxon: Prairie Visionary* (Regina: Couteau Books, 2007), 10.

the very beginning, the stuff of legend."[138] For many years after, the Métis and their sympathizers would hold that "The Death of Thomas Scott was, whether politically wise or not, an execution at the hands of a government after a fair trial."[139] Canadian Party supporters, meanwhile, would maintain that Scott had been murdered by a drunken rabble that had neither cause nor authority to execute anyone.

Scott himself became a contested site of memory. Every detail of his death was debated vigorously. Bumsted notes that there is even debate about the time of Scott's death. Some accounts held he was killed by the Métis firing squad, but others claimed Scott was still alive when he was placed in a coffin and suffered terribly before a final blow was dealt by the guards.[140] The final resting place of Scott's body was also a subject of much speculation – one of the more popular claims was that the body had been thrown in the river, weighted down with chains.[141] The question of Scott's body would still fascinate English Canada thirty-four years later, when Toronto's *Mail and Empire* reported that a surviving anonymous "…rebel Lieutenant" who "…is to-day a well-known Manitoban" had confessed: Scott's body had indeed been put through a hole in the ice of the Red River with a Hudson's Bay grindstone "tied about the neck." The paper earnestly hoped the mystery might be solved once and for all:

> Mr. McFarlane [who was a factor at the Red River settlement for the Hudson Bay Company in 1870] believes that an investigation will reveal this grindstone, and perhaps the bones of poor Scott. No doubt such will be made, and the question which for the last thirty-four years has been asked in vain will then, it is believed, be answered.[142]

No grindstone or identifiable bones were ever found, but this did not stop at least two Canadian veterans of the 1870 Red River Expedition from writing in to express support for the theory. J.J. Bell wrote that he had seen Scott's coffin, which had been empty apart from some blood and shavings. Bell wrote that "Various circumstances which came to light gave probability to the ice

[138] Bumsted, *The Red River Rebellion*, 165.
[139] Doug Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," 322.
[140] J.M. Bumsted, "Thomas Scott's Body," in *Thomas Scott's Body and Other Essays on Early Manitoba History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000), 5.
[141] Ibid, 9.
[142] "Scott's bones lie in the Red River: Victim of Riel's Treachery Given a Mock Internment." *Mail and Empire*, 20 January 1904, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 154.

theory, and such now appears to have been correct."[143] Meanwhile, N.J. Dingman, who had been the paymaster for the 1st Ontario Rifles that had served at Red River, wrote to the *Kingston Whig* and confirmed the empty coffin Bell had spoken of, but added further lurid details. He claimed to have spoken with a "…little half-breed servant girl" who had witnessed Scott's river burial. In his account, the girl told Dingman that Scott was still alive when Riel's men weighed him down and shoved him in the river.[144] It was all very macabre and cloak-and-dagger – and true or not, such sensational stories only enhanced the martyrdom of the unfortunate Scott. Career soldier and Wolseley Expedition participant Sam Steele devoted two pages of his 1915 memoir to the details of Scott's death and burial. Steele repeated the rumor that Scott had been finished off by his guards while lying in his coffin. He also reported on the disposal of Scott's body, noting that "It was supposed then that Scott was buried within the walls of the fort, but it has since been clearly proved that this is not so."[145]

The Reverend George Young, who had witnessed the execution, would later write an account published under the headline "Tom Scott Died Bravely: Riel Heard No Cry For Mercy."[146] Young would emphasize Scott's noble character and blamelessness, noting "…commendatory letters of introduction, with certificates of good character from Sabbath school teachers" as well as endorsements from clergy and employers.[147] Scott became the hero of more than one fictional account of the events of 1870, opposite Riel as the dastardly villain. It is worth noting that in at least one melodramatic retelling of the events at Red River, by J. Edmund Collins, a Scott stand-in is portrayed as an actual soldier holding the rank of Colonel.[148] While completely untrue, such accounts held a certain appeal to the public. As a martyr for Canada, Scott had made the ultimate sacrifice – it was only a small step to move the Ontario Orangeman from the status of soldier of the moment to an actual career soldier. The soldier fiction had staying power – some seven decades later, near the end of the Second World War,

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[143] "Disposal of Scott's Body," *Mail and Empire,* 22 January 1904, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 154.
[144] "Story of Scott's Death: Finding the Empy Coffin," *The Evening Telegraph*, 8th February 1904, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 157.
[145] Samuel Steele, *Forty Years in Canada: Reminiscences of the Great North-West with some account of his Service in South Africa* (London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd., 1915), 10-11.
[146] Reverend George Young, "Tom Scott Died Bravely: Riel Heard No Cry For Mercy." May 1893, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Albert Braz, *The False Traitor*, 49.

W.D.I. Wright, a veteran of the Northwest Field Force of 1885, would write down his reminisces – and in them, Scott would become a professional soldier once again. Wright had the following to say about the death of Scott:

> A young French-Canadian lawyer, Louis Riel, was chosen as the Metis leader, and in an altercation with Captain Scott, the commander of the local militia, Riel shot Scott, and fled. A warrant was issued for his arrest.[149]

It is possible that Wright is confusing Thomas Scott who died outside of Upper Fort Garry with a second Thomas Scott (no relation), who served in Wolseley's Red River Expedition later that year. The surviving Scott went on to lead a second expedition to Red River in 1871. He would go on to become a Lieutenant Colonel and President of the Red River Expeditionary Force Association – the official veterans' association for the Canadian soldiers who had marched, sailed and portaged with Wolseley.[150] Regardless of confusion about the two Scotts, words such as "soldier" and "hero" were often seen as interchangeable – and thus it not surprising that some perceived the execution of Thomas Scott as a hero's death. The line between fact and fiction, hazy at the best of times, had vanished entirely in the case of the martyred Ontario Orangeman.

The story of the No. 1 Company of Winnipeg Volunteers essentially ended with the shooting of Scott. There was no more serious resistance to the provisional government from within the Red River settlement, whether from Boulton and the Canadians, or anyone else. It was not, however, the end of Canadian military involvement in Red River. As early as February of 1870, the Canadian Cabinet considered sending a military force to the settlement to ensure no further unrest could occur. Historian George F. Stanley notes that at no time did John A. Macdonald seek a purely military solution to the troubles in Red River, but there was a war-party in Ottawa that favoured using coercive force to deal with Riel's provisional government.[151]

Even within the Red River settlement, there was a call for soldiers, although it was believed that these troops should only be sent once the Canadian government had "conducted peaceful negotiations with the people of this country". Local resident Alexander Begg, writing

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[149] W.D.I. Wright. "Riel Revolt Remembered in the Deeds of Fusiliers," in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, MG29 E10, LAC, 1.
[150] George F.G. Stanley, *Toil and Trouble*, 91. See also "List of members of Wolseley's Red River Expedition Association," Wolseley Red River Expeditionary Force Association, MG10 C6, 1887, Archives of Manitoba.
[151] Ibid, 76-77

under the pseudonym "Justitia" in a 12 February 1870 letter to the Toronto *Globe*, stated his belief that soldiers should only be sent west once Canada had officially taken possession of the territory and that they should not serve not as an occupying army, but as an impartial force of law and order:

> It is perfect nonsense for people to speak of sending troops in here to rule us with a high hand – to treat us as the Northern do the Southern States…. But strengthen the hands of the Local Legislature here so that the body will not be obliged to call on part of the settlers to force another, and in time the wounds existing will gradually heal, and the people of the country will unite in time in bonds of amity under a happy and peaceful Government.[152]

In Orange Ontario, meanwhile, many believed the role of soldiers should be to put down what they saw as an illegal insurrection. As early as 12 January 1870, the *Niagara Mail* had belligerently called for the use of force:

> Let the Dominion Government offer three of four hundred acres of land to every Canadian volunteer who will go up next spring to Red River, and enough good fellows will be found to put Riel and his followers under the sod.[153]

When Scott's execution provoked demonstrations and outrage in Canada, pressure on the Canadian government to mount a military expedition became overwhelming.[154]

The Red River Expedition of 1870 was as a mixed force of British regular troops and Canadian volunteers numbering just over 1000 men. It was led by Colonel Garnet Joseph Wolseley, the Quartermaster-General of British troops in Canada. The British contribution of 250 men was chiefly through the 60th Rifles, although a small number of soldiers belonging to other formations such as the Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers also joined the march west.[155] The Canadian contingent was comprised of two battalions of twenty-one officers and 350 men each, with one battalion from Ontario and the other from Quebec.[156] The government stipulated as a requirement that all Canadian volunteers have no previous ties to Red River, ostensibly to ensure an impartial military force. The *Canadian Illustrated News* reflected the government's

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[152] J.M. Bumsted, *Reporting the Resistance: Alexander Begg and Joseph Hargrave on the Red River Resistance* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2003), 244.
[153] *Niagara Mail*, January 12, 1870 as quoted in Helen Elliot, ed., *Fate, Hope and Editorials: Contemporary Accounts and Opinions in the Newspapers* (Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1967) 89.
[154] Stanley, *Toil and Trouble*, 76-77.
[155] Ibid, 84.
[156] Ibid, 91.

stance when it stated in July of 1870, that the soldiers en route to Red River were on a "mission of peace":

> It will not have to crush a rebellion, nor even to fire a shot. Its whole duty will be to assert, by Its presence, the majesty of British law; to guarantee peace and protection to the settlers already in the country, and to see that the new comers receive a hospitable reception.[157]

Peaceful or not, the Red River expedition captured the interest of the press. The *News* had followed events at Red River closely since late 1869. It published a prodigious number of drawings on the subject, detailing the people and places connected to the troubles. Scholar Sean Sullivan notes that initially the *News* was somewhat sympathetic to Riel and the Métis, but with the execution of Scott, that sympathy disappeared. The *News* printed perhaps the most famous illustration of Scott's execution – and as Sullivan explains, the image was "…designed to shock the reader with its brutality":

> Blood flows from his [Scott's] head. The shooters mannerism, expression and clothing evoke the image of an outlaw. Significant as well, is the reaction of Riel's men to the execution. Judging by their faces and posture, most are horrified by this killing.[158]

[157] "Our Canadian Portrait Gallery: Lieut.-Col. Caslault,D.A.G.," in the *Canadian Illustrated News,* July 30, 1870, 69, Charles de Volpi's Illustrated Newspaper collection, Series 1, PB-540, folder 23, Glenbow Archives.
[158] Sean Sullivan, "Canadian Illustrated News and the Red River Rebellion (October 1869-1870)" – Canadian Illustrated News, 1869-1883, http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/canadian-illustrated-news-1869-1883/Pages/cin-red-river-rebellion.aspx#d (accessed 21 September 2016).

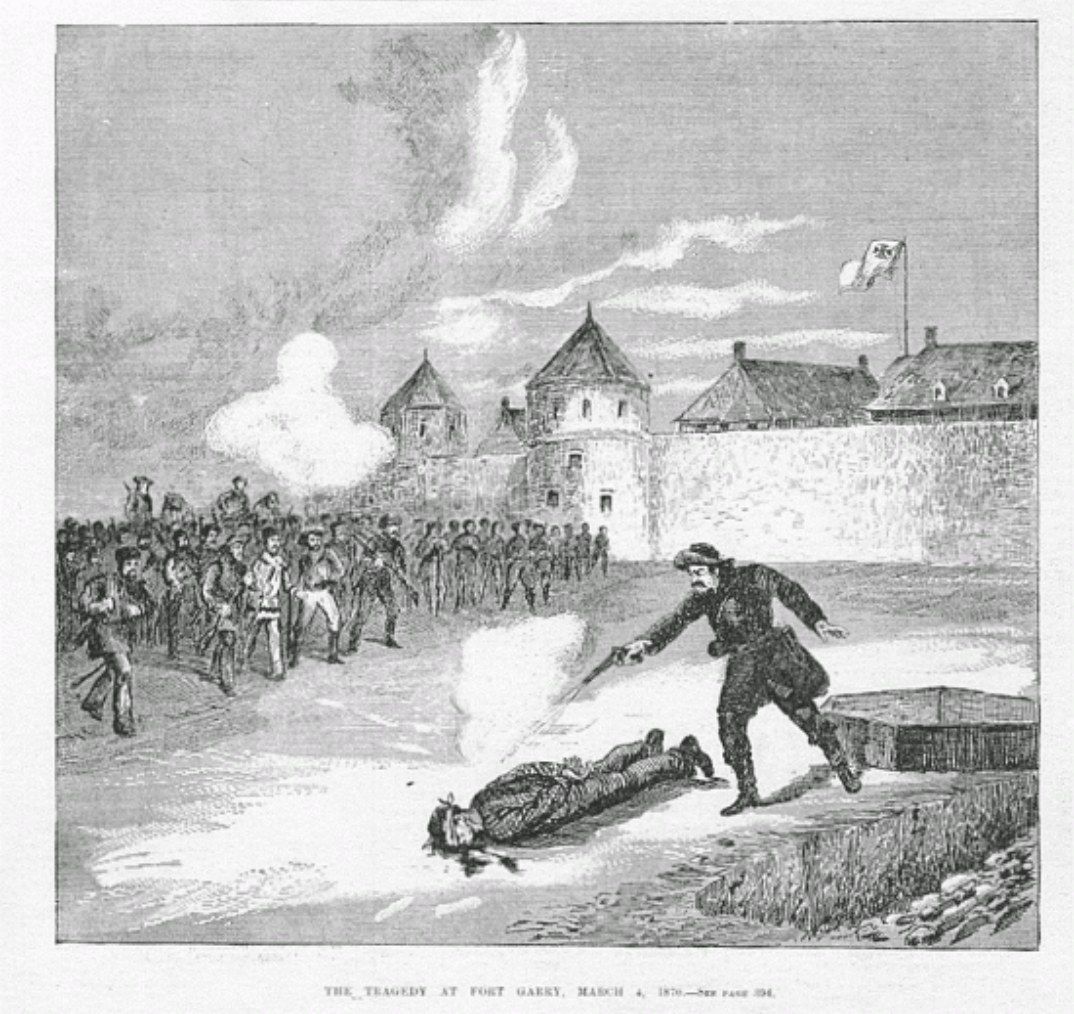

Figure 1: The Tragedy at Fort Garry, March 4, 1870. Library and Archives of Canada, Item number 1028.

Once the Red River Expedition was underway, the *News* printed very positive images of Canadian soldiers. There was an image of the Quebec Battalion receiving the colours. Other illustrations portrayed the soldiers on board the ships that transported them across the Great Lakes or encamped at Thunder Bay. Still more showed the men braving the portages en route for Red River. All images gave the notion of an orderly and successful expedition.

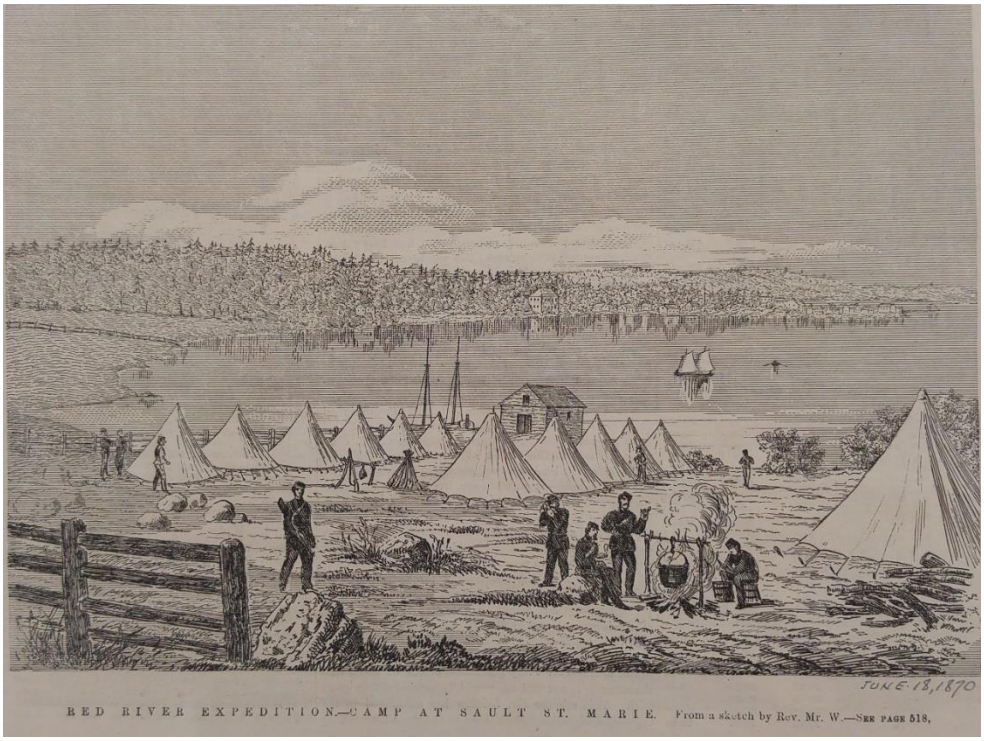


Figure 2: Red River Expedition – Camp at Sault St. Marie. Glenbow Archives, Charles De Volpi's Illustrated Newspaper collection.

The *News* also published portraits profiles of the expedition's commanders. On 30 July 1870, the *News* offered a profile of Lieutenant-Colonel Casault, commander of the Quebec Batallion. Much was made of Casault's well-placed French-Canadian family and his service in the British Army. The *News* also noted approvingly the Dominion government's policy of putting an Ontarian at the head of the Ontario Regiment and a Quebecker in charge of the Quebec Regiment. This would be perhaps the first – though certainly not the last – time that supporters of the Canadian military would portray it as a place where the country's "two solitudes" could work together as equals:

> With such an experienced leader as Col. Wolseley at their head, and with such officers as second in command as Lieut.-Cols. Casault and Jarvis, Canada may well have confidence that the expedition she has sent forth on a mission of peace to the Red River will acquit itself to the credit of the country in the face of all contingencies.[159]

[159] "Our Canadian Portrait Gallery: Lieut.-Col. Caslault,D.A.G.," in the *Canadian Illustrated News,* July 30, 1870, 69, Charles de Volpi's Illustrated Newspaper collection, Series 1, File 23, Glenbow Archives.

The same illustrations that appeared in the *News* were also published in *L'opinion publique*, a French-Canadian paper – thereby further emphasizing a sense of French-English unity. Not all would claim that 1870 had been marked by enthusiastic cooperation between French and English. Writing many years later, Captain J. J. Bell would state that in Quebec "While the murder of Scott could not be condoned, the sympathies of the people were with Riel, their fellow countryman of French extraction." Bell noted that the French Members of Parliament were opposed to a military expedition until they were assured that it would serve as a police force rather than as an avenging army.[160]

The expedition began its journey west in early May. The only resistance the troops encountered were the natural obstacles presented by the Canadian shield. Some of these problems – mosquitoes and heat, for example - were more a nuisance than a direct challenge. What did present a real difficulty was the lack of a usable road from Prince Arthur's Landing, where the soldiers set up camp after sailing across Lake Superior, to the Red River Settlement. Work had already begun on a corduroy road and the arriving soldiers soon found themselves giving up drill practice and instead supplementing the road construction crews. Construction was still not going quickly enough, however. By 27 May, Wolseley was expressing concerns about the speed of construction, noting in a letter to his wife that "The last four or 5 bridges I crossed over was [sic] bad and will require a good deal of work done to it before it will be fit for heavy traffic."[161]

The road actually began not at Fort William, but near Lake of the Woods, and so the Canadian and British soldiers had to work their way up the river system with the expedition's supplies, which involved a number of arduous portages over unnavigable rapids. Historian George Stanley notes that at least some soldiers had not anticipated the hard, physical labour, both on the road and on the portages.[162] Writing twenty-six years later, Captain S. Bruce Harman of the 1st Ontario Rifles would report that the volunteers began one song with the following lyrics: "It was only as a volunteer that I left/my abode/I never thought of coming here to work/upon a road." He also noted, however, that "…willing hearts were there, and they soon

[160] J. Jones Bell, "The Red River Expedition," *The Canadian Magazine*, in Ontario Historical Society fonds, Ontario Historical Society scrapbooks, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, MU5442, Archives of Ontario, 29.
[161] Letter from Colonel Garnet Wolseley to Louisa Wolseley, 27 May 1870, MG10 C6, Archives of Manitoba, 1-2.
[162] George Stanley, *Toil and Trouble*, 116-117.

made up their minds that the work had to be done, and done it would be if it was in their power".[163] According to one anonymous volunteer who wrote to the *News,* the ideals of manly effort and soldierly comradeship won out over any discomfort:

> …taken altogether, it was not so unpleasant an excursion after all – for the men had courage and endurance and goodwill, and strength, and brotherly feeling to one another; and the strongest helped the weak, -- and when the day's work was over and all partook of that rest they had earned so well, and which was so welcome after long hours of toil, many slept more peacefully and better upon the hard rock or the white sand, which fringed the edge of some beautiful lake, or failing these, upon the softer mud of some arduous "portage," than they were wont to do in downy luxury of their distant homes.[164]

Other members of the expedition, such as Sam Steele, recorded that soldiers and voyageurs alike bore heavy loads to show their strength. He noted that "…everyone of us, on account of the training given by the heavy work, became much stronger than when he started, although he was then in good condition."[165] William Francis Butler, an English officer who had scouted out the Red River settlement before making a rendez-vous with the expedition, also lauded the physical condition of the soldiers. After commending the British regular troops, he offered the following observation in relation to the Canadians:

> To the lot of these two regiments of Canadian Volunteers fell the same hard toil of oar and portage which we have already described. The men composing these regiments were stout athletic fellows, eager for service, tired of citizen life, and only needing the toil of a campaign to weld them into as tough and resolute a body of men as ever [a] leader could desire.[166]

Ultimately, Wolseley chose to move ahead with the 60th Rifles via the waterways while work on the road continued. For that reason, Wolseley and the 60th, rather than the Canadian volunteers, were the first to reach Upper Fort Garry, sailing down the Red River from Lake Winnipeg. The Reverend MacBeth would recall years later the first encounter between Wolseley's soldier and the Selkirk Settlers, as the expedition stopped on its way down the Red River:

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[163] Captain S. Bruce Harman, " 'Twas 26 Years Ago: Narrative of the Red River Expedition" in the *Daily Mail and Empire,* May 30, 1896, Ontario Historical Society fonds, Ontario Historical Society scrapbooks, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, MU5442, Archives of Ontario, 23.
[164] *Canadian Illustrated News*, August 26, 1871, 8 as recorded in George Stanley, *Toil and Trouble*, 117.
[165] Sam Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, 26.
[166] Sir William Francis Butler, *The Great Lone Land: A Tale of Travel and Adventure in the North-West of America*, 19th ed. (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1923), 178-179.

> Many of the settlers went down to see them, but once they got within the picket lines they stayed there, much to their surprise, all night. Col. Wolseley, so far as he knew, was in the enemy's country, and was not going to run any risks from possible spies; hence every man that came within reach was held and examined by him. Of course, the people who were satisfied as to their own loyalty and knew nothing of military rules were considerably incensed, and one of the older men of the Selkirk settlers is said to have waxed perilously near the profane as he wrathfully assured the gallant Colonel that he was just as loyal as that commander himself. Wolseley, however, remained provokingly unmoved, and so quite a number of the settlers remained in "corral" till next morning, when he moved on to Fort Garry.[167]

The Rifles arrived on 24 August to find an empty Fort – Wolseley would write to his wife that the 60th had been drawn up "…in battle array" as it approached the Fort and had been spoiling for a fight, despite the continuous rain. The commander recorded that "We were like drowned rats when we reached the willow near the Fort when we heard that Riel had run away!!!"[168] The disappointment among Wolseley and his troops was palpable. Butler would later write of the soldiers of the 60th: "…and if a fear lurked in the minds of any of them, it was that Mr. Riel would not show fight."[169] On 24 August, their worst fears were confirmed.

Despite the lack of a climatic final battle, the Expedition had achieved its goal. The Canadians soldiers arrived via the completed Dawson Trail shortly after the 60th had reached the Red River Settlement. By 10 September, Wolseley and his British troops were departing Fort Garry, leaving the Canadian volunteers behind to keep the peace.[170] How well the Canadians actually kept that peace is very much a subject of debate.

Many Canadian volunteers, looking back on their experience, would have fond memories of the expedition – the trip across the Great Lakes, the portages and the road construction – but have little to say about the occupation. Captain S. Bruce Hartman, in his narrative of the expedition, focuses almost entirely on the voyage to Red River. Out of nine pages detailing various portages and a good number of humorous events that transpired – such as one soldier mistaking barbeque sauce for mosquito repellent – the occupation of Red River takes up less

[167] MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian* West, 87.
[168] Letter from Colonel Garnet Wolseley to Louisa Wolseley, 24 August 1870, Archives of Manitoba, MG 10 C6, 1-2.
[169] Butler, *The Great Lone Land*, 173.
[170] Stanley, *Toil and Trouble*, 175.

than a page, and most of that is dedicated to Colonel Wolseley's farewell address to the troops.[171] The account of J.J. Bell showed the same focus on the expedition, with no words devoted to the occupation of Fort Garry.

Wolseley and the 60th Rifles left for the East less than two weeks after their arrival in Fort Garry. His departure was quick enough that he did not have time to address the Ontario Rifles directly, but instead wrote a farewell address which was read to the troops. As the years passed, the veterans of the expedition would come to cite Wolseley's address as if it were scripture. In his address, the Colonel was already forging what would become a dominant story of the expedition for most of English Canada: that British regulars and Canadian volunteers had accomplished an epic feat in crossing the wilderness between Southern Ontario and Red River.

> From Prince Arthur's Landing to Fort Garry is over 600 miles through a wilderness of forest and water, where no supplies of any description are obtainable. You had to carry on your backs a vast amount of supplies over no less than forty-seven portages, making a total distance of seven miles, a feat unparalleled in our military annals…. Your cheerful obedience to orders has enabled you, under the blessing of Divine Providence, to accomplish your task without any accident."[172]

Wolseley further remarked that although "…the banditti who had been oppressing this people fled at your approach," he still believed the volunteers "…deserved as well of your country as if you had won a battle."[173]

The journey to Red River had certainly been an arduous one, but as historian George Stanley has pointed out, it was hardly unprecedented. He noted that Hudson's Bay Company boats had long used the river ways between Lake Superior and Red River. As well, the water levels were low in August and the expedition had hired experienced guides:

> The labour involved was trying to men unaccustomed to such work; but the actual dangers did not equal those that Canadians had faced for generations on the Ottawa, or its tributaries such as the Gatineau, or those of the St. Maurice, over which Canadian Lumbermen had travelled for years. Nor were they any worse

[171] Captain S. Bruce Harman, "Twas 26 Years Ago: Narrative of the Red River Expedition 1870," in in the *Daily Mail and Empire*, May 30, 1896, MU5442, Ontario Historical Society Scrapbooks, Ontario Archives.
[172] Col. Wolseley's valedictory address, as cited in *The Manitoba News-Letter*, Number 1, Winnipeg, Tuesday, September 13, 1870, in Ontario Historical Society fonds, Ontario Historical Society scrapbooks, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, MU5442, Archives of Ontario, 115.
[173] Ibid.

> than those which Major Crofton had faced when he let 347 soldiers, 17 women and 19 children to Fort Garry in 1846.[174]

Despite the fact that Wolseley and his men were not trailblazers, the expedition became seen as a signal achievement. When Wolseley passed through Toronto on his way back to Great Britain, he was invited to an official banquet to celebrate the success of the Expedition. The Colonel was unable to attend, but Mayor Samuel B. Harman nevertheless honoured him with an official address in the Council Chambers. Much like Wolseley's address to the Ontario Rifles a month before, it told a story of British manliness persevering over untamed wilderness. Mayor Harman compared the expedition to a recent British mission into Abyssinia: "the Red River expedition is entitled in all respects, save that of magnitude, to the same record on the roll of fame as that commanded by a Napier."[175] Wolseley did send the mayor a written response, which further reinforced the expedition's swiftly-growing status as an unprecedented achievement of British and Canadian manhood:

> It is not for me to make comparisons on such a subject, but I can confidently assert that no previous military operation has ever entailed greater physical labour upon all ranks, and that no soldiers have ever supported excessive fatigue with greater endurance or cheerfulness than those who left Canada last Spring for the Northwest.[176]

In Montreal, Wolseley did attend a grand banquet in his honour – and received another written address that similarly praised the Colonel and his soldiers. It described the task "of leading a considerable body of troops through an uninhabitable territory" as something to "tax the utmost skill", and lauded Wolseley's organizational abilities. For the soldiers themselves, the address reserved particularly passionate adulation. Just as Wolseley had in his address to the troops, the Montreal address was inclined to speculate on Canadian fighting prowess:

> It has been a source of pride to us to learn the Volunteers have conducted themselves in a manner worthy of the Dominion they represented and whose authority they were sent to establish, and of the regular troops whom it was their happiness to be associated. And while it is a matter for sincere congratulations and of devout thankfulness to Almighty God that the Expedition has been a peaceful one, we feel satisfied that had it been otherwise, you, and the troops

[174] George Stanley, *Toil & Trouble*, 167.
[175] "Address to Colonel Wolseley by the Mayor and Citizens of Toronto," in Ontario Historical Society fonds, Ontario Historical Society scrapbooks, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, MU5442, Archives of Ontario, 40.
[176] "Reply to the Mayor and Citizens of Toronto," 9 November 1870, in Ontario Historical Society fonds, Ontario Historical Society scrapbooks, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, MU5442, Archives of Ontario, 170.

> under your command would have achieved equal success as you have done in overcoming the difficulties of a long and dangerous journey.[177]

This version of the Expedition's story would prove resilient, fading little with the passage of years. In 1896, the *Mail and Empire* would write that the Red River Expedition was "…one of the most notable examples of an expeditionary force sent into strange country far from its base of supplies."[178] Three years later, in 1899, the *Metropolitan* would run a feature on the career of Garnet Wolseley. Referring to the Red River Expedition, the article described the then-Colonel taking over 1,200 soldiers through "…some 1,200 miles over an untrodden wilderness." They made a point of his extreme punctuality, noting that he "…arrived at this destination within twenty-four hours of the time fixed before leaving Toronto."[179] In March of 1913, when Wolseley passed away, the Canadian Press celebrated the Expedition as a heroic achievement: "Advancing through the trackless wastes of the Northwest Territory the forces had almost insurmountable obstacles to overcome, frequently making portages of tremendous length."[180] Captain S. Bruce Harman, a former volunteer and then President of the Wolseley Red River Expeditionary Force Association in Toronto, contrasted the hundred-day journey of the force by noting that currently the same voyage would take less than three days.[181] One month later, in April of 1913, *Saturday Night* recalled the Expedition as a terrific success, "…justly celebrated in the newspapers and literature of the day, to the credit of the superior officers, and notably of the gallant Col. Garnet Wolseley."[182] Downplayed in all of these accounts was the vital work of local voyageurs and Indigenous guides in ensuring the safety of the Expedition as it navigated the "untrodden" wilderness.

This is not to say that the Wolseley narrative went completely uncontested in English Canada. In late 1903 Martin J. Griffin, Parliamentary Librarian of Canada, wrote to the *London Times* to criticize the then-Lord Wolseley's most recent account of the Expedition:

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[177] Address of Welcome from the Citizens of Montreal –1870, Garnet Joseph Wolseley fonds, Series 4, M-1332-56-21, Glenbow Archives, 1-2.
[178] "Red River Expedition. The Narrative of One of Those Who Joined in it, by Captain S. Bruce Harman," *Mail and Empire*, 28 May 1896, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario,, 113.
[179] "The Three Generals … of the British Army," *Metropolitan*, 25 February 1899, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 56.
[180] "Lord Wolsely, Great Soldier, Hears Last Post," 25 March 1913, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 100.
[181] Ibid.
[182] "An Incident of the First Rebellion" in *Saturday Night*, 13 April 1913, in Ontario Historical Society fonds, Ontario Historical Society scrapbooks, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, MU5442, Archives of Ontario, 65.

> Lord Wolseley exaggerates the military character of the expedition. This was all very well when he was only publishing a pleasing address to the troops; it is out of place now. The fact is, that the rebellion originated with a demagogue and a few farmers. It was suppressed by a military picnic. There was no fighting. The demagogue fled. The farmers were found in their fields. The route over which Lord Wolseley passed, though stiff enough for a large force with much weight to carry, had been for two centuries the highway of French commerce and communication. The exploit of passing over it was not heroic or classic, though Lord Wolseley talks of the Romans.[183]

Griffin also stated that Wolseley's expedition had only been a success thanks to the intervention of Bishop Taché. The librarian claimed that Riel considered leading a "counter-expedition" to "…arrest the progress of Wolseley, or to annihilate them; as they could have easily done, knowing so well every mile of that country." Griffin claimed that Taché convinced Riel to abandon this violent course of action, thereby saving the Red River Expedition from failure or even destruction.[184] Griffin's criticism, pointed though it was, did not quash the myth of the heroic and herculean expedition – the Wolseley narrative remained in the ascendant. It is also worth noting that while Griffin challenged Wolseley's account of the expedition, he did not question the dominant English-Canadian interpretation of the Métis who formed the provisional government. In Griffin's view, Riel was a demagogue, and his misguided followers were no more than a few misguided farmers. The provisional government was still seen as a rebellious body, with its murderous intentions allayed only by the tact and wisdom of Bishop Taché. Last but not least, Griffin did not bother touch upon what happened during the Canadian soldiers' occupation of the Red River settlement.

Contemporaries – especially the veterans themselves – wrote little about the expedition's time in Manitoba, but there is no question that the approximately 700 volunteers left quite a mark on the Red River settlement with their presence. Some of the effect was cultural – almost immediately after arriving, the volunteers began to organize concerts, for the entertainment of both themselves and the locals. The concerts were very popular with certain segments of the settlement's population. One local paper was breathless in its praise of a concert performed

[183] "Slap at Lord Wolseley: Librarian hits him hard," *Evening Telegram*, 13 December 1903, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 154.
[184] "Bishop Tache Saved Wolseley's Life," *Evening News*, 20 January 1904, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 155.

under the patronage of Colonel Jarvis and the other officers of the 1st Ontario Rifles on 12 October 1870:

> The Concert of last Monday evening was a decided success – in every sense of the word. Not only was there a large and fashionable audience, but the performance itself merited the highest praise from every one present. The only drawback was the small size of the hall. Over one hundred persons who were unable to gain admission had to return home disappointed.[185]

Over the winter of 1870-1871, concerts, plays and variety shows abounded at Red River. After the first overcrowded performance in Bannatyne's and Begg's Hall, most concerts were held at a venue called the Theatre Royal, where one show's playbill listed the price as 50 cents for box seats and 25 cents for the pit. Tickets could be purchased at Bannatyne and Begg's store.[186]

Both regiments of volunteers mounted productions. The 2nd Battalion of Quebec Rifles put on their show within the walls of Lower Fort Garry on 16 November 1870. Theirs was a variety show, however, with music and two theatre productions, and was free to all. The Ontario Rifles, not to be outdone, mounted a minstrel show on 3 February 1871. The performers called themselves the "Red River Minstrel Troupe" and availed themselves of every offensive stereotype such shows contained. The playbill advertised a performance by "JAMES CURRAN, in his special Song and Dance, POMPEY MOORE STUMP SPEECH, by the talented Negro Deliniator CAMERON." There was also a song and dance number called "De Nigger's Version Ob De Creation."[187] The production was mounted twice, with a second showing three days later. The Red River Minstrels would perform for the public at least two more times that winter.[188]

The Quebec Battalion responded at Lower Fort Garry with a play called "The Gipsey Farmer" on 10 February 1871.[189] These performances only ended when the soldiers were sent home in 1871. Just before an April 1871 production by the Ontario Rifles at the Theatre Royal, *The Manitoban* wrote the following:

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[185] "Grand Concert," in unknown publication, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 129.
[186] "Theatre Royal, Sixth Night of the Season, Grand Concert," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 130.
[187] "Theatre Royal! Red River Minstrel Troupe! 1st Ontario Rifles," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 133.
[188] Theatre Royal! Red River Minstrel Troupe! Second Performance," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 134-136.
[189] "Varieties Club, 2nd Battalion (Quebec) Rifles," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 135.

> Remember that there will not be many more chances of seeing and hearing this talented association perform, as the time is fast drawing near when the 1st Ontario Rifles will return to their homes, and previous to their departure the Association will be broken up, and we hope that our citizens will continue their patronage and thereby show that the efforts of the Ontario Rifles Musical and Dramatic Association have been duly appreciated.[190]

The tradition of Canadian soldiers mounting dramatic performances continued long after the departure of the first Red River Expeditionary Force in 1871 – new arrivals under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Osborne would mount performances for the public until at least 1875.[191]

The soldiers themselves might not have written much about their time at Red River, but they were very clearly active in the community – and at least some of them were taking souvenirs back east. Among a scrapbook collection of the Red River Expedition kept at the Archives of Ontario is a proclamation from Louis Riel's provisional government from April of 1870. Written on the proclamation is the following: "Found in Riels [sic] Room Fort Garry on the arrival of the expeditionary force – 24 August 1870."[192] This was likely not the only memento taken by Canadian soldiers.

Some residents did not remember the minstrel shows so much as they recalled the tensions created by the arrival of the soldiers. One individual who had arrived in Winnipeg in the wake of the Red River expedition later recalled that

> Feeling was very intense in Winnipeg but not so much in the country parishes, and everyone was classed as "loyal" or "rebel", the classification being dependent upon his previous actions if he had been in the country at the time, or by his associates if he happened to be a later comer.[193]

This division of the settlement frequently resulted in violence – often instigated by the soldiers themselves. This was not supposed to be the case. Before his arrival, Wolseley had sent a message to the inhabitants of Red River, which Riel himself allowed to be printed in both in French and English and distributed throughout the settlement:

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[190] "Military Items," *Manitoban*, n.d., in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 138.
[191] "Garrison Theatre, Friday Ev'g, February 26 1875," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 139.
[192] "Maison du Gouvernement Provisoire, Fort Garry, 7 Avril 1870," Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 140.
[193] Remembrances of William Laurie, Glenbow Archives, 13.

> The Force which I have the honor of commanding will enter your Province representing no party, either in Religion or Politics, and will afford equal protection to the lives and property of all races and of all creeds. The strictest order and discipline will be maintained and private property will be carefully respected. All supplies furnished by the Inhabitants to the Troops will be duly paid for, should any one consider himself injured by any individual attached to the force, his grievence [sic] promptly enquired into.[194]

In his final address to the troops, Colonel Wolseley also warned against taking sides in Red River:

> Some evil-designing men have endeavoured to make a section of this people believe they have much to dread at your hands. I beg of you to give them the lie to such a foul aspersion upon your character as Canadian soldiers by comporting yourselves as you have hitherto done.[195]

Despite their commander's advice, the Ontario Rifles often went out into the community and picked fights with those they identified as "rebels." William Laurie was a young man who had just arrived in Winnipeg with his family, and described frequent violent encounters between soldier and Métis:

> I well remember that during the fall and early winter of 1870 we could always rely upon several exciting fights between the soldiers and halfbreeds any afternoon after three o'clock, by which hour the soldiers who were not on duty at the garrison were at liberty to come down town.[196]

Scholar Laurence Barkwell has compiled a list of alleged abuses by the soldiers, which he calls a "reign of terror agains the Métis of Red River."[197] In February of 1871, one particular incident occurred in which the soldiers showed just how much they were willing to flaunt the very law and order they had sworn to protect when they had joined the expedition. A member of the garrison had tricked a Métis man out of his horse, harness and sleigh in a gambling match. In response, the province's Attorney-General arrested the soldier and locked him and some of his compatriots in the new provincial jail. Before long, the soldier's comrades stationed at Upper Fort Garry heard of his imprisonment. William Laurie described what happened next:

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[194] "To the Loyal Inhabitants of Manitoba," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 177.
[195] "Address to Colonel Wolseley by the Mayor and Citizens of Toronto," in Ontario Historical Society fonds, Ontario Historical Society scrapbooks, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, MU5442, Archives of Ontario, 40.
[196] Remembrances of William Laurie, Glenbow Archives, 11.
[197] Lawrence Barkwell, *The Reign of Terror Against the Métis of Red River*, Gabriel Dumont Institute, http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/07260.THE%20REIGN%20OF%20TERROR.pdf (accessed December 5, 2017).

> [B]y the time I reached the village I found nearly 200 of the 300 men composing the garrison congregated in front of the jail, and was just in time to hear the demand made for the doors to be opened. This was refused and in a very few minutes the main door was carried off its hinges by a huge log used as a batteringram [sic] by as many as could get their hands upon it…. It did not take long to release the prisoners, whereupon the attackers quietly withdrew and "forming fours" in a perfectly regimental manner, with the prisoners mounted shoulder high, marched to the Davis House, where they proceeded to celebrate their victory in the usual manner.[198]

Ultimately, a soldier named George Lee claimed responsibility as the ringleader, and was awarded three days' confinement to barracks as punishment. After that, the matter was considered closed.[199] Years later in 1934, John Andrew Kerr, a veteran of the Ontario Rifles who had helped to break into the jail, would write about his experience in the Winnipeg *Tribune*. Kerr's account would largely line up with the old-timer's, but would include further details of what happened when the regiment's commanding officer, Colonel Jarvis, attempted to hold the soldiers responsible for their actions. He described how an inebriated George Lee facing off against an exasperated Colonel:

> George, a giant standing 6 ft. 8 in. in his socks, who had partaken freely, answered that the force did not propose to allow any d----d civilian to put one of us in jail. One question led to another, and then the colonel, standing very straight, said to Lee: "Do you know that you are a mutinous fellow? He turned to the patrol with the command: Place this man under arrest." We shouted "No, no!" Lee, stretching out his hand, patted the colonel's head, remarking jovially: "You see, colonel, your word don't go with this crowd. Come on boys." Whereupon we resumed our march, and, singing, arrived in barracks.[200]

Local resident John O'Donnell recorded in his 1909 memoirs that as they marched back to the barracks, the soldiers declared they would "hang the Attorney-General on the Barracks gate some day." O'Donnell noted that "The Attorney-General looked upon the whole affair as a warning which he should take, and he did."[201] Veteran John Kerr, however, seemed to take the whole affair – and his role in it – much more lightly. His courthouse story, along with a violent

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[198] Remebrances of William Laurie, Glenbow Archives, 23-24.
[199] Ibid, 24.
[200] John Andrew Kerr, "Barracks Room Pranks, Fort Garry, 1871: Wosleley Expedition Survivor Tells of Horseplay and Escapades of Youth in Early Days of What is Now Winnipeg," *Winnipeg Tribune*, Saturday 21 July 1934, in fonds Societé historique de Saint-Boniface, "Evenements de 1869-70, Articles, coupures de presse, 1934-1972," box 54, file 1.2/144, Centre du patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface.
[201] John O'Donnell, *Manitoba as I Saw it From 1869 to Date, With Flash-Lights on the First Riel Rebellion* (Winnipeg, Clark Bros. & Co. Limited, 1909), 53.

account of a knife fight between Kerr and another soldier in which Kerr was stabbed in the leg, was printed under the headline "Barracks Room Pranks, Fort Garry, 1871," suggesting Kerr (and the newspaper publisher) considered laying siege to a courthouse more of a lark than a crime.

R.G. MacBeth also remembered the violence of the soldiers, noting that "…conflicts more or less sharp were not infrequent on the streets of the straggling village."[202] MacBeth recalled that one such incident resulted in the death of a former member of the provisional government:

> In one case a French half-breed, who had hot words with some of them in a saloon, was chased by an excited crowd to the river, and was there drowned in efforts to escape from them, thought it was not likely they would have done him any serious injury.[203]

The dead man was Elzear Goulet, a prominent member of the Métis community. MacBeth made excuses for the behavior of the Canadian soldiers, adopting a "boys will be boys" attitude. His statement that the group of men chasing Goulet was unlikely to have "done him any serious injury" minimizes the threat presented by the soldiers and suggests Goulet overreacted in fleeing into the River. In his memoirs, Sam Steele even denied that soldiers were involved, claiming instead that "two-travel stained horsemen" he had encountered were responsible.[204] The Métis community would disagree, remembering the death of Elzear Goulet as a cold-blooded murder by Canadian soldiers and the occupation as a time of terror for their people.

In an 1873 letter to Alexander Morris, Louis Riel would describe how Goulet had been attacked by four men that he called "Les quatre assassins" – a world apart from the relatively harmless hot-heads that MacBeth had described in his memoir. Riel was frustrated that two of the men were Canadian soldiers, and yet had not been punished by the Canadian authorities. He also noted that Goulet was not the only death of a Métis or Métis sympathizer to happen during the occupation. He also blamed the death of an English Métis named James Tanner, who has died when he was thrown from his buggy.[205] His horse had been spooked by two unknown persons, but Riel was convinced that these individuals were connected in some way to the Canadian occupation:

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[202] R.G. MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian* West, 90.
[203] Ibid, 90-91.
[204] Samuel Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, 34.
[205] Stanley, *Toil and Trouble*, 191.

> At Portage, Tanner was also killed by men sharing Wolseley's ideas. This murder has remained similarly unpunished. Generally, the population of this country has been attacked and had its property taken for the most part by immigrants and a large number of men from the militia. And the Canadian authorities are allowing us to be crushed.[206]

Riel's description of a population living in fear was very much at odds with the image promoted by the musical performances of the Canadian battalions during the winter and spring of 1870-71. In his letter, Riel assigned blame for disharmony squarely on the shoulders of Wolseley and his expeditionary force:

> Instead of treating us amicably as is the right of people who have done their duty for him, Wolseley entered the province like an enemy. And to reward us, in the name of Canada, for how we took care of the Province of Mantioba and the Northwest Territory since the transfer, he has pillaged all that belonged to us inside the Fort. He leaves peaceful and respectable citizens to languish in prison and to be mistreated by his soldiers.[207]

Again, how citizens remembered the actions of soldiers – both provisional government forces and Canadian volunteers – depended chiefly on whether or not they considered Riel's provisional government legitimate. For "loyalist" veterans such as J. Jones Bell, Boulton, Butler and others, the reign of terror had ended when Colonel Wolseley and his soldiers drove Riel and his men from Upper Fort Garry. There was no doubt in their minds that Riel was a tyrant – and they painted a picture of the Métis leader as dangerously self-absorbed, unstable and violent. The death of Scott and the treatment of the body afterwards, in their minds, was the final nail in the coffin of the provisional government's legitimacy. Meanwhile, Riel saw the provisional government not only as legitimate, but solely responsible for the maintenance of peace in the settlement, in the face of Canadian violence and belligerence. In his view the treatment of the Métis by Canadian soldiers was a betrayal of the agreement that had been reached between Canada and representatives of the provisional government. The fact that Goulet's murderers were allowed to go free was only further proof of the depth of that betrayal.

In 1872, almost one year before Riel's letter to Alexander Morris, Riel and Ambroise Lepine – the provisional government's Adjutant-General – wrote a letter to Manitoba Lieutenant Governor Adams George Archibald in which they established their version of what happened in

[206] Translated from Louis Riel à Alexander Morris, [Saint-Vital], 3 Janvier 1873, Reference No. 1093-531, fonds Louis Riel, (accessed 23 October 2016) Centre du Patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface.
[207] Ibid.

1869-70. Riel and Lepine argued that the provisional government was legitimate and that the federal government had acknowledged this legitimacy by entering into negotiations with its representatives. They further claimed they had rendered service to the Canadian government:

> From this day forward, we the undersigned, with the help of men that the people provided us for counsel while we waited for competent authorities to replace us, effectively governed in the interests of Canada, her province of Manitoba and her Northwest Territories until 24 August 1870. In doing so we served the Dominion in an uncontestably generous manner.[208]

The writers assured Archibald that they were both "…toujours sujets loyaux de la couronne d'Angleterre." Their loyalty to the British crown only made the Canadian government's betrayal all the more tragic. Riel and Lepine wrote that "Les troupes, en arrivant, n'eurent pour nous que des outrages. " They told of loyal citizens arrested and held by Wolseley, and recounted the deaths of Goulet and another man who they only identified by the name Tanner.[209] In their view, Wolseley's expedition had not restored peace and order – instead, it had initiated a reign of terror that was still ongoing as of the writing of their letter.

Many other Métis would share Riel and Lepine's memory of the troubles of 1869-70. Speaking in the Manitoba legislature in 1890 in defence of French language education, Métis politician Martin Jerome would also defend the actions of the provisional government as not only justified, but loyal to the British crown:

> The English flag that never ceased to fly over our heads in 1869 and 1870, bears witness to our loyalty to Her Majesty. We submitted to England, but we do not recognize other authorities. We recognized Canada as a sister colony and believed ourselves justified in halting it from taking possession of our soil, and we believe it was justified to push back even with violence….[210]

Jerome would go on to explain that it had all been to protect the rights of the community and to ensure the residents of Red River were consulted, essentially repeating the same story as Riel and Lepine.

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[208] Translated from Louis Riel et A.-D. Lépine à A. G. Archibald, 5 février 1872, Reference No. R505, fonds Louis Riel, http://archivesshsb.mb.ca/en/permalink/archives139139 (accessed 5 November 2016), Centre du Patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface.
[209] Ibid.
[210] Translated from Martin Jérôme, *Souvenirs d'Autrefois par Martin Jérôme*, in Fonds Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba, Publication 1916-1967, 0285/1341/084, Centre du Patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface, 6.

The Métis did not form a veterans' association the way Wolseley's soldiers would, perhaps in part because of fears they might be harassed or attacked as a result. In March 1872, Riel would write to Archbishop Taché that Canadian leader Charles Schultz had attempted to steal his papers – Riel feared that Schultz wished to identify other supporters of the provisional government of 1869-70.[211] Eventually, an organization was formed which included many individuals who had participated in the provisional government: the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba, established in 1887. One of the primary goals of the association was to commemorate the events of 1869-70. The Union nationale always presented the actions of the provisional government as a gallant – and divinely ordained – defence of Métis rights. In November of 1891, the Union nationale unveiled a monumental tombstone for Riel. The monument celebrated Riel's role as President of the provisional government of 1870 at Red River. The Union often contrasted Riel's later actions in 1885 to 1869-70, painting the earlier actions in a positive light and the later ones as negative. In a Union speech in 1906, Father Langevin declared that the government of 1869-70 had been a "legitimate defence", but that Riel's actions 1885 were "regrettable." He held that in 1885, Riel had rebelled against a legitimate government at the same time as he had separated from his Church, which Langevin called his mother -"sa mère."[212] The 1869-70 conflict, by contrast, was a just struggle.

Writer Bernard Bocquel writes that by the turn of the century, there was little doubt that the Union nationale remembered the provisional government and its actions as heroic, leading directly to the creation of Manitoba.[213] In this environment, events and individuals began to take on a mythic status. Father Noël Ritchot, who had served as the provisional government's chief negotiator in Ottawa, became a hero in the community, even while he was still alive. In 1890, at a meeting of the Union nationale, Roger Marion fêted Father Ritchot with the following words: "It is to you we owe the political liberties we presently have, and that the enemies of our

[211] Louis Riel et A.-D. Lépine à A.-A. Taché, Saint-Paul, 19 mars 1872, Reference No. R138, fonds Louis Riel, http://archivesshsb.mb.ca/en/permalink/archives139020 (accessed 5 November, 2016), Centre du Patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface.
[212] Bernard Broquel, *Les Fidèles à Riel :125 ans d'évolution de l'Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba* (Winnipeg : Éditions de la Fourche, 2012), 111.
[213] Ibid, 107.

religion and our nationality want to remove from us."[214] The crisis of 1869-70 had come to be seen as a struggle for the very survival of the Métis nation.

In stark contrast, the majority of the English-Canadian public perceived the events of 1869-70 as a rebellion. The participants were perceived as misguided at best, or as downright villainous at worst. R.G. MacBeth's reminiscences of Ambroise Lepine, the military commander of the provisional government, clearly illustrate this view. MacBeth clearly respected Lepine – his memoir comments admiringly on the Métis leader's physical size and strength. Throughout his memoir, MacBeth seemed to value physical prowess and see it as a sign of moral and personal strength. MacBeth's writing also indicates that he considered Lepine's good character the exception rather than the rule. The rest of the Métis were far less deserving of respect:

> No excuse can be made for his complicity in some of the events that transpired later, but of all the leaders of the rebellion he was the only one who manifested anything like manliness after it was over, by refusing to stay abroad and by submitting to arrest, saying that the law could take its course with him seeing he had only done what he thought was his duty.[215]

Lepine's courage only served as a foil to the cowardice of "regular" Métis. The true heroes of 1869-70 were the brave Canadians who had stood against Riel, such as Schultz, Woodington and Scott, and the Canadian volunteers who had marched with Wolseley.

The veterans of the Red River expedition also formed an association dedicated to the memory of 1869-70. It came into being not long after the 1885 conflict once again put Canadian soldiers in the spotlight. In a meeting held in Winnipeg on 21 April, 1887, they organized under the name of "Wolseley's Red River Expeditionary Force Association." Its object was "…to preserve the esprit de corps and the traditions of the late force, by holding Annual Re-unions, and granting aid when necessary, to members who are incapacitated by sickness or otherwise." In attendance at the initial meeting was Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's son, Hugh John Macdonald, along with a number of other prominent Winnipeg citizens.[216]

The organization soon contacted the now-General Viscount Wolseley, asking him to accept the position of "patron of the association." The commander's gracious reply might have

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[214] Translated from Bernard Broquel, *Les Fidèles à Riel*, 70.
[215] MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West*, 44.
[216] "To General Viscount Wolseley, KP, Adjutant General, Winnipeg, May 4, 1887," Garnet Joseph Wolsely fonds, Series 4, M-1332-56-60-OS, Glenbow Archives.

been taken straight from his final address to the troops, re-iterating as it did the Wolseley narrative of the Red River expedition:

> It is I can assure you a great pleasure to me to receive any communication from this Association bringing together as it is intended to do those comrades who worked with me so zealously and well, in an expedition, the arduous duties of which can only be fully appreciated by those who performed them.[217]

A membership list from the 1880s counted 135 members scattered across the Dominion, the United States and even England. The largest single group of members – seventy in all – resided in Manitoba, with thirty-five of those living in Winnipeg and Saint Boniface – a testament to how many volunteers decided to move permanently to the new province to make their fortune.[218]

Many of the volunteers became prominent citizens in the years after 1870. Expedition Captian Daniel Hunter McMillan, who also served in the Fenian raid of 1866, would go on to be appointed the lieutenant governor of Manitoba in 1900.[219] Allan Macdonald, also a Captain in the expedition, became inspector for the Department of Indian Affairs before passing away in Winnipeg in 1901.[220] Major Acheson Gosford Irvine of the Quebec Rifles served as a commissioner in the Northwest Mounted Police and eventually became Warden of the Manitoba Penitentiary.[221] Richard Jones settled in Winnipeg and worked for the Customs service for over thirty years before opening his own business.[222] Major W. Hill ended up working in the Winnipeg Land Titles Office, while Hugh John Macdonald, the son of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, would become a prominent lawyer and Premier of Manitoba.[223] William Forbes Alloway, who arrived in Manitoba as a private in the expedition, founded the banking firm of

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[217] Letter from Sir Garnet Wolseley to Frank L. Clarke of Victoria B.C., 28 June 1889, Wolseley Red River Expeditionary Force Association, MG10 C6, Manitoba Archives, 2.
[218] "List of members of Wolseley's Red River Expedition Association," Wolseley Red River Expeditionary Force Association, MG10 C6, Archives of Manitoba, 3-10.
[219] Col. D.H. McMillan, 6 September 1900, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 78.
[220] "Indian Inspector Macdonald Dead," *Manitoba Free Press*, 29 November 1901, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 103.
[221] No title, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 122.
[222] "Richard I. Jones, Resident of City Since 1871, is Dead," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 28 December 1934, in Old Timer's Association of Manitoba fonds, MC10 C29, Archives of Manitoba.
[223] "Officers – First Ontario Rifles," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 109.

Alloway and Champion, and by 1910 was one of Winnipeg's nineteen millionaires.[224] His fellow private Stewart Mulvey became director of the Winnipeg General Hospital and served as both a Winnipeg City Alderman and an MLA for the province of Manitoba.[225] Joining him in the provincial legislature was expedition lieutenant David Marr Walker, who served as Attorney General of Manitoba from 1878 to 1882.[226] Lieutenant William Nassau Kennedy, meanwhile, became the second mayor of Winnipeg and would later command the Winnipeg Field Battery and the 90th Winnipeg Rifles.[227] Thomas Scott – the one who had not been executed by Riel – became the third mayor of Winnipeg and also served as a Member of Parliament. Outside of Manitoba, expedition veterans also became influential citizens, such as legendary Mountie Sam Steele. The volunteers were not, by and large, like the working-class men who populated the ranks of the British army – rather, they were English Canada's middle class and upper middle class. As such, the veterans of the Red River expedition had a strong influence on Canadian society in general and Winnipeg society in particular.

The Association held regular and well-organized reunions in both Winnipeg and Toronto. In 1895 the Winnipeg branch of the Association arranged for a July reunion and banquet to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Red River expedition. They sent out official notice cards requesting that invitees RSVP – tickets were two dollars and included the membership fee for 1895.[228] Meanwhile, in Toronto, annual reunion dinners also began to be organized in 1895. By 1899 the meetings were well-established and were being held in Webb's Restaurant, at 66 Yonge Street.[229] The *Mail and Empire* reported seventeen veterans in attendance in 1899 and that "Most of the time was taken up in relating pleasing reminiscences, those of Lieut.-Col. McMillan being especially entertaining." Association President Captain Bruce Harman also presented all

[224] "Memorable Manitobans: William Forbes Alloway," Manitoba Historical Society site, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/alloway_wf.shtml (accessed 28 September 2017).
[225] "Memorable Manitobans: Stewart Mulvey (1834-1908)," Manitoba Historical Society site, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/mulvey_s.shtml (accessed 28 September 2017).
[226] Memorable Manitobans: David Marr Walker (1835-1920)," Manitoba Historical Society site, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/walker_dm.shtml (accessed 28 September 2017).
[227] Memorable Manitobans: William Nassau Kennedy (1839-1885)," Manitoba Historical Society site, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/people/kennedy_wn.shtml (accessed 28 September 2017).
[228] "Red River Expedition Association, Secretary's Office, Winnipeg, June 15th, 1895," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.
[229] "Toronto, 25th August 1899," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 116.

attendees with a copy of his narrative of the expedition.[230] The following year, on the thirtieth anniversary of the expedition, the Toronto Association again held its reunion at Webb's.[231] In Winnipeg, a reunion was also held that year, but with a slight twist. The *Mantioba Free Press* announced "It has been decided in connection with Citizens' Day at the Winnipeg Fair this year that the same shall be rendered memorable by the attendance of the survivors of the original Red River expedition in 1870."[232]

Veterans were not only active in the Red River Association. In Manitoba, for instance, there was also an Old-Timers' Association, started in 1903. Anyone who had been residents of Western Canada for at least twenty-five years could join, but the veterans of Wolseley's expedition would play a particularly prominent role in the organization. By 1904, John Hugh Macdonald was the president of that association and Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Scott represented those who had marched "With Wolseley." Honourary patrons of the Old-Timers included Donald Alexander Smith, Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal, and Manitoba Lieutenant Governor Daniel Hunter McMillan.[233] The symbol of the Association, printed on all its stationary, was the old gate at Upper Fort Garry – a central point in the settlement until the 1870s, but also a pivotal location for the events of 1869-70. At its height in the early 1900s, the Association was extremely active in Manitoba and Winnipeg. In 1928 it provided Grants to the Children's Aid Society, St. Joseph's Orphanage, the Children's Hospital, the Children's Home, and the Winnipeg Humane Society. By that time Hugh John Macdonald, now in his autumn years, had also been named a honourary patron.[234] Macdonald died the following year, however, and by the 1940s, the Old-Timers' association was beginning to fade away. In 1941, the organization's secretary treasurer received a request for a donation to the war effort in the Second World War. His reply, written on 9 May, 1941, explained why no donation was

[230] "Red River Expedition: The Association Holds a Pleasant Reunion at Webb's – Interesting Reminiscences Related," *Mail and* Empire, September 10, 1899, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 158.
[231] "Red Rive Expedition Association. 30th Anniversary," Toronto, 24th August, 1900, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.
[232] "Veterans of 1870 to Attend Fair," in *Manitoba Free Press*, n.d., in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.
[233] "Ye Dinner of Ye Olde Times," Wood plaque, in Old Timer's Association of Manitoba fonds, MG10 C29, Archives of Manitoba.
[234] Annual Meeting, 14 January 1928, in Old Timer's Association of Manitoba fonds, MG10 C29, Archives of Manitoba, 4.

forthcoming: "Our Association has been neglected and has been allowed to 'run down.' We are now trying to revive it. Our total bank account would not make a worthy donation."[235]

As time went by and their numbers began to dwindle, it became common for the veterans to associate themselves with other old-timer and veteran groups. In 1920, a reunion called the "Annual Campfire Banquet" was held not only for Wolseley's soldiers, but also for the veterans of the Fenian Raids, the 1885 veterans, the Red River Settlers, and "Trail blazers" from the wider Northwest. Guests toasted the Queen, the ladies, and various groups at the banquet, with the Red River expeditionary Force being toasted by Hugh John Macdonald, W.J. Tupper, and Major General H.B.D. Ketchen.[236]

While the Red River expedition veterans were perhaps the most organized and prominent English-Canadian memory community connected to the events of 1869-1870, they were not the only English Canadians commemorated. Thomas Scott, martyr of the No. 1 Company of Winnipeg Volunteers, was also the subject of much attention in the years following the troubles of 1869-1870. Unlike the demise of Goulet or Tanner, whose deaths went unpunished, once the Wolseley expedition arrived, there were concerted attempts to persecute those believed responsible for Scott's demise. In 1874, Ambroise Lepine, who had refused to flee Red River or to hide, was put on trial for the murder of Scott and found guilty.[237] He was imprisoned, but was ultimately released after only a few years in exchange for giving up his political rights and agreeing never to become politically involved again.[238] Of course, many felt the true murderer of Scott was Louis Riel – and in their eyes, Riel had escaped justice.

Scott did not receive a statue or a memorial, but he did have an Orange Hall in Winnipeg named in his honour. The cornerstone was laid in July 1900, and the Orangemen struck a medal to commemorate the occasion. On one side, the medal displayed an image of the building and the name of the new hall. On the inverse, it was engraved with an image of William of Orange

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[235] Letter from J.C. Downie to J. Snowden, 9 May 1941, in Old Timer's Association of Manitoba fonds, MG10 C29, Archives of Manitoba.
[236] "Annual Campfire Banquet," Tuesday, May 4, 1920, in North West Field Force Box 4, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[237] J.M. Bumsted, "Thomas Scott and the Daughter of Time," in Gregory P. Marchildon, e.d., *The Early Northwest* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 2008), 329.
[238] Ambroise Lépine à [Louis Riel], Prison Manitoba, 2 juin [1875], Reference No: 1091-307, Louis Riel Collection, http://archivesshsb.mb.ca/en/permalink/archives148430 (accessed 5 November 2016), Centre du Patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface.

on horseback at the battle of the Boyne in 1690, surrounded by the following words: "Men.Y.Scott, Murdered at Fort Garry, 4 March, 1870."[239]


Figure 3: The inverse side of the Thomas Scott Memorial Hall Medal. Archives of Manitoba, MG16, C6/19.

Not only did the medal associate Scott with the Orangemen's greatest hero. It also established that his death was murder, once again denying the legitimacy of Riel's provisional government. The opening of the Memorial Hall itself was no small event, involving prominent members of the Winnipeg community and beyond. Grand Master T.S. Sproule, an Ontario Member of Parliament and later Speaker of the House of Commons, described Scott in glowing terms to a crowd that included Winnipeg's mayor:

> …he considered it the crowning honor of his life that he had been given an opportunity to dedicate this hall to the memory of the hero who lost his life in defending freedom and order. The name of Thomas Scott would ever remain, and

[239] Medal, Scott Memorial Orange Hall, MG16, C6/19, Archives of Manitoba.

> the action of these who erected this hall would be appreciated by Orangemen all over Canada.[240]

The martyrdom of Scott, who had never worn a uniform, made him one of the most celebrated Canadian soldiers of the Dominion's early years. Despite Scott's notoriety, only the memorial hall stands as testament to his sacrifice. Similarly, there were almost no sites of memory dedicated to the other men at Red River who had resisted Riel's provisional government, or the soldiers of the Wolseley expedition. This lack of commemoration was not the case for Riel's supporters, who actively celebrated the provisional government and its defenders.

The most prominent monument directly connected to the 1869-70 conflict was created specifically to commemorate what the Métis referred to as "La Barrière" – the barricade erected in November of 1869 to prevent Governor MacDougall from entering the Red River Settlement. A stone monument of a Christian cross was erected in 1906 in the Métis community of St. Norbert, near the site of the original barrier. Bernard Bocquel states that originally, there was only one word on the monument: "Souvenir." He also notes that the erection of the monument involved a large portion of the Métis community:

> The occasion of the erection of a cross of remembrance at the very spot where la barrière was built in 1869, took the form of a national and religious festival, set for Wednesday 24 October 1906. For the celebration, the first banquet in the history of the Union métisse was organized.[241]

For the Métis, this was truly the monument to veterans of 1869-70 – more so than Riel's tomb or any other site. Many in the membership had a personal stake in how the events of 1869-70 were remembered; by 1906 the secretary of the Union métisse was Roger Goulet, the son of Métis martyr Elzear Goulet. There is no doubt the organization was dedicated to commemorating what they saw as the courage of their fathers, uncles, and older brothers.

Even the English newspaper the *Winnipeg Free Press* noted the occasion, remarking that "many old warriors were present." The *Free Press* report paraphrased the speeches from the unveiling, all of which promoted the heroic Métis narrative of 1869-70. One speaker compared

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[240] "The Scott Memorial. Orangemen honor the memory of Riel's victim." June 15, 1903, unknown paper, Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.
[241] Translated from Bernard Bocquel, *Les Fidèles a Riel*, 108.

the Métis at the barrier to the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae and to the children of Israel. Another referred to the fact that the Métis had proven they were loyal British subjects. Yet another emphasized that the actions at la Barrière had been selfless, protecting the rights of all Manitobans and Canadians:

> Since the days of "La Barriere" fanaticism and prejudice had to a great extent passed away and history commenced to do justice to the handful of heroes who exposed their lives for the defence of civil liberties, for their own civil rights and for the autonomy of the province."[242]

La Barrière monument would continue to be a powerful signifier for the Métis community for many years to come. In 1923, the Union Métisse held another celebration to commemorate the erection of the barrier, this time to consecrate it. In March the Union held a fundraiser in preparation for the consecration – an invitation card declared "Ce fut cet acte [the erection of the barrier] qui assura à l'Ouest ses libertés", and further explained that "Le but de ce monument est de perpétuer dignement cet événement historique, et nous sommes convaincus que tous les vrais Canadiens auront à cœur d'encourager cette hereuse initiative".[243] The consecration took place in August and was a grand affair. The sub-headline in the local Francophone paper, *La Liberté*, stated "La benediction du monument de la Barrière donne lieu à une très belle féte religieuse et nationale – La population française du Manitoba rend un hommage ému de gratitude au héros de 1869-70."[244] The paper reported that the ceremony was well-attended and noted with regret that the now-93 year-old M. André Nault, captain of the company that built the barrier in 1869, was unable to participate, presumably due to ill-health.[245] Speakers emphasized the legitimacy of the provisional government and the heroic nature of those who constructed the barrier. One speaker at the event, M. Guillaume Charette, explicitly connected the defenders of the barrier to a mythic Catholic and French-Canadian past:

> The Red River movement of 1870 does not belong to the Métis alone… Riel, Lépin, Nault and the others belong to history. Much like the Champlains,

[242] "Metis People Erect Monument: Cross Reared and Blessed on Site of "La Barriere" of 1869," *Winnipeg Free Press*, Thursday, October 25, 1906, 9.
[243] Soirée de paniers Au profit du Monument de Saint-Norbert SOUVENIR DE « LA BARRIERE », in Fonds Société historique métisse, Monument La Barrière, 0449/1351/167, Centre du Patrimoine, Société historique de Saint-Boniface.
[244] "Une Emouvante Ceremonie Nationale a St-Norbert," *La Liberté*, Mardi 14 Aout 1923, in Fonds Société historique métisse, Monument La Barrière, 0449/1351/167, Centre du Patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface.
[245] Ibid.

> Montcalms, and the La Vérendryes and all our national heroes, they belong to all those who speak French, who think French….[246]

Judge Prud'homme, also speaking at the event, was slightly more succinct, but made essentially the same point: "…c'est à la barrière de Saint-Norbert qu'a été écrit l'Acte du Manitoba" – without the barrier there would have been no *Manitoba Act*. At the barrier, Riel was just one bright star in a constellation of Métis heroes.

An editorialist in *La Liberté*, writing on the occasion of the monument's consecration, rejected the notion that the Red River Métis had ever been rebels. The author believed that among English Canadians "On semble disposé auhourd'hui à adopter un point de vue plus impartial et plus exact".[247] The more impartial and exact view of which the writer spoke was that what happened in 1869-70 was not a rebellion at all:

> Due to circumstances, Riel's provisional government was the only legal government of the country… during this whole period, the Métis never ceased proclaiming their perfect loyalty for England, the only power to which they owed allegiance. Thanks to the work of the Métis, Manitoba's entrance into Confederation was done on an equitable basis that recognized the rights of the French language and the Catholic religion.[248]

Eventually both French and English plaques were added to the monument. The two texts were largely identical – both concluded that the actions of the Métis had been justified, and had "…brought about the creations of the Province of Manitoba and ensured the rights of the population of Red River."[249]

Sometime between 1923 and 1930, the Union Métisse even published a "Souvenir de La Barrière" poster. The arrangement of the poster is very telling. In the middle of the poster are three photos: one of the monument, one of Riel, and one of Father Ritchot. Surrounding them on either side are portraits of other members of the provisional government – Elzear Goulet, Elzear Lagimodiere, Ambroise Lepine, and Andre Nault – presented as a constellation of heroes and martyrs surrounding the three main players. Below them were portraits of the current executive

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[246] Translated from "La Barrière de Saint-Norbert: Une Page de L'Histoire de L'Ouest," *La Liberte*, Mardi 14 Aout 1923, in Fonds Société historique métisse, Monument La Barrière, 0449/1351/167, Centre du Patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Translated from "La Barrière de Saint-Norbert: Une Page de L'Histoire de L'Ouest."
[249] English Plaque, La Barrière monument, Saint-Norbert, Mantitoba.

members of the Union Métisse, solidifying the links between the Métis present and the Métis past. In the background is a fence – presumably the barrier – and two flags that feature both the Union Jack and the fleur-de-lys, visually reinforcing the loyalty of the Métis to the crown and to their French heritage. A brief text at the bottom emphasized, once again, that the actions of the Métis had led to the creation of Manitoba and the preservation of citizen's rights.[250]


Figure 4: Souvenir de la Barrière. Centre du patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface, 16703.

The Barrière monument, which still stands today, is without a doubt the most prominent Métis monument to the troubles of 1869-70, but it is not the only memorial. In 1875, Father Ritchot and his parishioners constructed what was perhaps the first monument to the events of 1869-70 when they built the Chapelle du Bon Secours. According to the placard located at the Chapel, it was built "In honor of our blessed virgin Mary for her very special protection granted

[250] "Souvenir de la Barrière," fonds Societé historique de Saint-Boniface, Centre du Patrimoine, Societé historique de Saint-Boniface, 16703.

during the political troubles of 1869-70."[251] Across the street from the Chapel, directly beside the Church for the Paroisse catholique Saint-Norbert, a more recent monument commemorates both Riel and Ritchot. An engraving on the memorial in both French and English recounts the story of 1869-70 with a special emphasis on the barrier and on the role of Father Ritchot. It speaks in language that the Métis of 1870, 1906 or 1923 would easily recognize. It declares that the Métis created a national committee – and the barrier – to "…protect their rights" and that Ritchot supported "..armed resistance to *unlawful* Canadian encroachment [Italics added]." The monument also contains carvings of both a maple leaf - now replacing the British Union Jack found in the earlier souvenir poster – and a fleurs-de-lys, re-emphasizing that Riel and Ritchot were loyal subjects participating in a lawful resistance. Quotes were also carved into the memorial, further emphasizing the justice of their cause. A quote from Father Ritchot, dated to October of 1869, reads "Je suis prétre et ne peux porter les armes mais je suis avec vous parce que votre cause repose sur la justice."[252]

Another more recent memorial also commemorates Métis martyr Elzear Goulet. Elzear Goulet Park, located in St. Boniface, was only named in 2009 after a campaign by St. Boniface City Councillor Dan Vandal. A monument to Goulet was built inside the Park; it is a low wall designed to resemble the undulating waves of the Red River in which Goulet drowned. In many ways, the monument acts as a direct challenge to the martyrdom of Thomas Scott, who is referenced in a large quotation that is inscribed in both French and English on the monument:

> Scott's death 'is kept fresh in memory for the advantage of a noisy element, while thousands never heard a word of [Goulet's death], yet both of these deeds left a dark stain in [Manitoba's] history.' –Joseph Tennant, member of Wolseley's Red River Expeditionary Force.[253]

The choice to quote a member of the Wolseley's expedition, some of whom were likely responsible for Goulet's death, is very significant. It reminds viewers of the role that Canada and Canadian soldiers played in Goulet's demise, and emphasizes the injustice of this event. One could argue, however, that there is also something else going on here – the monument is not

[251] Chapelle du bon secours, Saint-Norbert, Manitoba.
[252] Riel-Ritchot monument, Saint-Norbert, Manitoba.
[253] Elzear Goulet Park monument, Saint Boniface, Manitoba.

simply trying to elevate one group's suffering over another. In Métis accounts and memorials of 1869-70, Scott is rarely mentioned, or when he is, his execution is considered justified. Similarly, most Canadian veterans only briefly ever mentioned Goulet in their reminiscences – if at all. This makes the quotation unique in monuments and memorials of the troubles of 1869-70.


Figure 5: Part of the monument at Elzear Goulet Park. Photo by the author.

It is possible to interpret Goulet's recent memorial as a bridge between the English-Canadian and Métis collective memories of 1869-1870. By mentioning Scott so pointedly in a monument dedicated not to him but to a Métis martyr, there is an acknowledgement that Scott's death is also a dark stain on Canadian history. At the same time, the quote also recognizes both Scott's and Goulet's death as two sides on the same coin of injustice. What is more, it comes from a Canadian soldier rather than one of Goulet's Métis compatriots – which only strengthens its impact. In Goulet's monument, both sides of the 1869-70 conflict are able to acknowledge the other's sorrow and sense of loss. This is perhaps the only public place where the door is opened, however slightly, to reveal a possibility of reconciliation. It would be a mistake, though, to read too much into this – for most of the last 146 years since 1870, there has been no such reconciliation. Goulet and Scott remained martyrs to their respective causes, and few bridges would be built between their two communities. The Métis would hang on tightly to the sense

that they had acted justly and been wronged. Meanwhile, the dominant English-Canadian narrative of 1869-70 – a narrative of Canadian soldiers bravely putting down a red-handed rebellion – would only grow in influence over time, impacting English-Canadian views of Riel, the Métis, and French Canadians for many years to come.

## Chapter Three

### Making Memories: Canadian Soldiers, Indigenous Soldiers, and the 1885 Conflict

Dictating an account of his life in 1903, Gabriel Dumont admitted that he wasn't sure who had been the first to die in the Northwest Conflict of 1885, despite having been in command of the Métis forces at the battle of Duck Lake. Gabriel and his Métis followers were facing off against a detachment of Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) and volunteer militia. Along with his brother Isodore and Assiyiwin, a First Nations man from the nearby Beardy reserve, Dumont rode out to parley with Major Crozier of the Northwest Mounted Police, in the hopes of avoiding bloodshed. This was not to be – the parley quickly turned violent when Assiyiwin tried to grab a gun from Joe McKay, an English Métis working with the police. "Most thought that the Indian who was killed by the policeman was the first victim of the war" explained Dumont, "But I think it might have been Isodore who was killed first. The Indian was unarmed and my brother had his rifle, and the police-man had to kill the armed man first so he would not be killed by him."[254]

"Gentleman" Joe McKay, for his part, claimed that he did not shoot anyone until ordered to do so by his commanding officer – but also made it clear Isodore had been shot first. Speaking to a reporter 50 years later in 1935, he described the moments that led to the outbreak of hostilities:

> There I was, in full view of the rebels, grappling with one Indian, and covered by the other, but I kept one Indian between me and the other one. When Major Crozier ordered us to fire, I whipped out my pistol, shooting the Indian who had been covering me, and then the other one, and the battle had started. The shots I fired were the first in the rebellion to inflict wounds.[255]

It is interesting to note that in his interview, McKay speaks about the first shots fired in the rebellion to "inflict wounds" – not the "first deaths" which resulted directly from those shots.

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[254] Gabriel Dumont, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks*, translated by Michael Barnholden (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1993), 56. There are two accounts of the 1885 conflict from Dumont – one recorded in 1887 and 1888, during a speaking tour of Quebec – and translated into English in 1949, and a second memoir in 1903, which is quoted above. The first memoir agrees with the second about who was shot first, stating "what makes me think that it was this shot that killed my brother is that this Metis had an interest in killing him, seeing that my brother was the only one armed." In "Gabriel Dumont's Account of the North West Rebellion, 1885," *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 30, Issue 3, September 1949, 254.

[255] "Duck Lake Battle Fought 50 Years Ago Today," Reprinted from the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, 26 March, 1935, in *Reminiscences of the Riel Rebellion of 1885, As Told By Old Timers of Prince Albert and District Who Witnessed Those Stirring Days*, R-1454, Source Materials on the North-West Rebellion, file No. VI.8, Personal Narrations: Prince Albert & District Old Timers, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

McKay's turn of phrase also indicates that others might have fired their weapons before him, but without drawing blood. In a photograph accompanying the interview, an aged and grizzled McKay is shown with his arm outstretched, aiming the very revolver that fired the "first shots." He looks every inch the frontiersman – fearsome and not to be trifled with, even in his old age.

Separate but connected debates also arose over who was responsible for the violence of the encounter at Duck Lake. In 1886, Father Gabriel Cloutier interviewed four individuals who had participated in the battle on the Métis side - Moise Oulette, Pascal Montour and two unnamed Indigenous men – and found that they placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the government forces. They maintained that Dumont had instructed everyone not to fire first. They also believed the police had come with the intention to fight, noting that "…quand on va pour parler en quelque part, on n'emmène pas des canons."[256]

Charles Boulton, who had been Riel's prisoner in 1870 and served with the Canadian forces in 1885, saw things very differently. Boulton had not been at Duck Lake, but espoused a widely held view in English Canada when he wrote the following in 1886:

> The mistake Major Crozier made was in attempting to hold a parley. Riel took advantage of this to send his men round, under cover of the gullies, and made an attempt to surround the Police and capture the whole party.[257]

For Boulton, it was Riel and Dumont who had been planning violence all along, while Crozier had compassionately – but foolishly – extended the hand of peace by holding a parley. While it seemed clear to all who had fired the first shots, the question of who was responsible for instigating the violence that followed was far more open to debate.

As time went by even McKay's claim to have who fired the first shots came into question, at least in some quarters. A Saskatchewan newspaper article written after the passing of MacKay claimed there would be no way to truly know what happened, stating: "However, now that Joe Mackay has passed from the scene it is not likely that the controversy will ever be settled as to who fired the shot that commenced the rebellion of 1885 along the banks of the

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[256] "Journal" de Mgr Gabriel Cloutier, P.A., V.G. lors d'une enquête sur les lieux après les évènements de 1885 en Saskatchewan, Séries Alexandre Taché, T5199, http://archivesshsb.mb.ca/media/75TachePDF/tache-cloutier_T55141-T55307.pdf (accessed 16 December, 2016), Centre du Patrimoine, Société historique de Saint-Boniface.

[257] Charles A. Boulton, *I Fought Riel: A Military Memoir*, Heather Robertson, Ed. (Toronto: James Lormimer & Company, 1985), 86.

Saskatchewan River."[258] It was peculiar that despite the written accounts of several eyewitnesses – Oulette, Montour and the two First Nations participants also claimed it was McKay – some still considered even such basic facts about the battle to be perhaps unknowable.[259] The 1885 conflict was already passing into the realm of myth and legend.

For McKay, Dumont, and most others who participated in the 1885 conflict, it was without doubt a life-defining affair. Dumont and McKay were particularly touched by events, due to their key roles in the struggle – but other, less prominent players felt they too had been caught up in an historic moment. They felt the need to remember everything long after the last shot had been fired, and yet found it difficult not to mythologize the events they themselves participated in. It did not help that the wider Canadian public had already begun to transform the conflict into a larger-than-life event even before it had concluded. The veterans of 1885 were both influenced by the broader collective memory and yet also tried to influence it themselves. Understanding how the veterans of 1885 formed their personal memories – what facets of their experience they chose to record in their diaries or share through their letters, and what mementoes they collected – allows us to see how vernacular memory contributed to the official narratives that swiftly developed around 1885, and how those official narratives supported or conflicted with the experiences of veterans. To study the development of collective memory around 1885, we first have to focus on the history of the veteran's experience itself.

Canadian soldiers would remember the events of 1885, first and foremost, as the adventure of a lifetime. They would also recall a sense of being part of something larger than themselves – the 1885 conflict was a chance to prove to everyone that the young nation of Canada could take its place in the world. While there was criticism of how the government had handled the crisis, ultimately they were tossed aside in favour of patriotism and comradeship with fellow soldiers. Many would come to see 1885 as the high-water mark in their life.

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[258] "Who Fired First Rebellion Shot?" in Mackay, Joseph, 1938, R-1454, Source Materials on the North-West Rebellion, file No. I.6, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

[259] [259] "Journal" de Mgr Gabriel Cloutier, P.A., V.G. lors d'une enquête sur les lieux après les évènements de 1885 en Saskatchewan, Séries Alexandre Taché, T5199, http://archivesshsb.mb.ca/media/75TachePDF/tache-cloutier_T55141-T55307.pdf (accessed 16 December 2016), Centre du Patrimoine, Société historique de Saint-Boniface.

This chapter will look at the diaries and journals of those who participated in the conflict, showing what white English Canadians identified as important to remember about the campaign. It will also examine how the conflict was covered by the media in Canadian cities such as Winnipeg and Toronto, and use various sources to discern public attitudes toward the veterans.

It is, unfortunately, much more difficult to determine the initial impressions of Indigenous participants, since there are no diaries or journals, nor significant print media produced by Indigenous communities in 1885. Instead, I have relied on later accounts from eyewitnesses, such as Dumont's memoirs and Father Cloutier's report, as well as oral histories gathered in the twentieth century. There can be no doubt that for the Métis and First Nations veterans who had faced the Canadian forces, the 1885 conflict was a pivotal moment in their lives, albeit a far more tragic one. Riel's Métis would put up a strong resistance to federal forces and many among them would maintain the justness of their cause long after defeat. First Nations – who were frequently portrayed by white settler Canadians as murderous and cowardly stooges of the Métis – fought bravely and capably, but suffered greatly because of the conflict nonetheless. White Canada's image of the violent, bloodthirsty First Nations warrior was not created by 1885, but the conflict helped cement that stereotype for years to come. First Nations would largely reject this characterization, seeing their resistance as justified.

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, there is no doubt which narrative was predominant with the English Canadian public: that of the Canadian veterans. They were celebrated as heroes with parades, receptions, dinners and soirees. The soldiers – even those who were critical of the campaign – embraced their role as national heroes. Métis and First Nations veterans would not immediately challenge this dominance; many were forced to focus on basic survival in the wake of a costly defeat.

As in 1869-70, the origins of the 1885 conflict were rooted in the region's difficult relationship with the federal government in Ottawa. In the early 1880s, First Nations, Métis and white settler populations in Alberta and Saskatchewan – then part of Canada's Northwest Territory – had numerous and varied grievances with the Canadian government. It is worth noting, however, that the Métis grievances could trace their roots back to the events of 1869-70. Father Gabriel Cloutier, sent in 1886 to the Métis community of Batoche to compile a report on the recent conflict, started his account with the following statement:

> A general discontent among the Métis was widespread and afterwards credited to the vengeful actions of the government vis-a-vis Riel and Lépine, and also the vengeful actions of certain among the English vis-à-vis the Métis in general, vis-à-vis a Métis who was drowned by the English, etc.[260]

Not only did Cloutier link Métis discontent in the 1880s to their mistreatment in 1869-70, but he also directly referenced Goulet's death at the hands of Canadian soldiers. As many of the Red River Métis moved west, they carried the memory of 1870 with them – so much so that calling in Riel seemed an excellent way to address their current grievances. In June 1884, French and English Métis persuaded Louis Riel to move from Montana to Saskatchewan and lead negotiations with the federal government on their behalf.[261]

Much as in 1869-70, Riel attempted to build alliances in the region – in this case, between Métis, First Nations, and white settlers. Riel even met with the English-speaking inhabitants of Prince Albert in July 1884 and received what was described as a "hearty and enthusiastic" welcome.[262] Riel also courted Indigenous leaders such as Big Bear, who themselves were attempting to form a First Nations alliance to negotiate better terms with the government – although the *Saskatchewan Herald* recorded that Big Bear did not seem particularly impressed by Riel's plans.[263] Regardless, on 16 December 1884 a petition was sent to Ottawa by Riel and his colleagues. In the document, the grievances of each group were addressed in turn. Among the demands for greater rights were complaints about the treatment of the provisional government of 1869-1870. It was another indication that Riel – and likely the Métis he represented – still felt that the Canadian government, and particularly Wolseley's soldiers, had been unjust.[264]

Ottawa's response to the petition was slow to come and did little to assuage concerns when it finally arrived. As a result, in March 1885 Riel proclaimed a provisional government at

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[260] Translated from "Journal" de Mgr Gabriel Cloutier, P.A., V.G. lors d'une enquête sur les lieux après les évènements de 1885 en Saskatchewan, Séries Alexandre Taché, T5141, http://archivesshsb.mb.ca/media/75TachePDF/tache-cloutier_T55141-T55307.pdf (accessed 16 December 2016), Centre du Patrimoine, Société historique de Saint-Boniface.
[261] Bob Beal and Rod Macleod, *Prairie Fire*, 105-106.
[262] Ibid, 112.
[263] Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser, *Loyal till Death*, 61.
[264] Beal and Macleod, *Prairie Fire*, 124.

the Métis town of Batoche, much as he had at Red River in 1869-70.[265] This time, the scope of his government was smaller, as he was unable to convince the white settlers, the English Métis or many First Nations peoples to join him. What was more, the Canadian presence in the Northwest was already established. As a result, the legality of Ottawa's control was not in question, as it had been at Red River in 1869-70. Neither the NWMP nor the authorities in Ottawa were inclined to permit what they saw as an illegal government to operate unmolested. And so, on 23 March, Gabriel Dumont and his Métis fighters confronted a force of police and volunteer militia at Duck Lake. Although the first casualties of the battle were Isodore Dumont and Assiyiwin, the Métis soon gained the upper hand. The police and volunteers took heavy casualties and were forced to retreat.[266] The news electrified the white settler population across the Northwest, and resulted in a call to arms in Eastern Canada. Fearing that First Nations warriors might join Riel's Métis, the federal government quickly organized an army of volunteers under the British Major-General Frederick Middleton and sent it West to deal with the crisis.[267]

Initially, Middleton's plan was to march his entire army directly to Batoche, but there was pressure from the government to protect white settlers in other areas from First Nations warriors – a threat more imagined than real. This pressure led him to divide his forces into three separate columns.[268] In Alberta, soldiers marched north from Calgary to "over-awe the Indians in the district." Further east, another column marched from Swift Current to Battleford, where white settlers had taken shelter fearing an attack by First Nations warriors that never came. Middleton himself led the third and most important column, which headed straight for Batoche and engaged in two battles with the soldiers of Riel's provisional government. The first battle happened on 24 April at Fish Creek (also known as Tourond's Coulee), on the edge of what the Métis considered their territory.[269] The battle, which resulted in higher than expected casualties for the Canadian forces, caused Middleton to halt his advance for two weeks, with the Canadians

[265] Ibid, 134. Thomas Flanagan argues that the government always planned to address the claims of the Métis, and that Riel actually made the situation worse. See *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered*.
[266] Stonechild & Waiser, *Loyal till Death*, 68-69.
[267] Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 100-101.
[268] Desmond Morton and Reginald H. Roy, Ed., *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign 1885* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1972), xli.
[269] Historical Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Battle of Tourond's Coulee – Fish Creek National Historic Site.

finally marching on Riel's headquarters at Batoche on 9 May.[270] After four days of fighting, the outnumbered Métis defenders were overwhelmed and Batoche fell to the federal troops.[271] Riel surrendered, though some resistance continued until 4 July 1885.[272]

The other two columns, under Colonel Thomas Bland Strange and Colonel W.D. Otter respectively, also faced combat. Colonel Otter's column reached Battleford without major incident, and after several days of inaction he decided to lead a punitive raid against the First Nations camp of Chief Poundmaker, despite having received directions from Middleton to stay where he was.[273] On the morning of 2 May a portion of Otter's force launched an attack on Poundmaker's encampment near Cut Knife Creek. The battle lasted most of the day, but in the end, Otter was forced to withdraw. The First Nations warriors were prepared to pursue the retreating Canadians, but Poundmaker called on them to stop, thereby preventing further casualties or perhaps even the destruction of Otter's force.[274]

The Alberta Field Force marched north and eventually began to pursue Chief Big Bear's Indian band. On 2 April 1885 a group of young braves from the band shot and killed nine white settlers at the small community of Frog Lake. Indian agent Thomas Quinn and two priests were among those murdered, and a number of other white settlers – including women and children – were taken prisoner.[275] Chief Big Bear opposed the killings, but was unable to stop them. The band now came under command of war chief Wandering Spirit, who himself had begun the massacre by killing Quinn. Shortly afterwards, the band captured nearby Fort Pitt from the NWMP and took more hostages, mostly women and children. The federal government feared a general Indigenous uprising, and so Major-General Strange was sent north from Calgary with a force to drive out Big Bear's Band and prevent further insurgency. On 28 May, Strange engaged the Band at what would come to be known as the battle of Frenchman's Butte. The last major military confrontation of the 1885 conflict, it was an inconclusive battle that saw both sides

[270] Jack Dunn, *The Alberta Field Force of 1885*, 7-8.
[271] Walter Hildebrandt, "The Battle of Batoche," in Gregory P. Marchildon, Ed., *The Early Northwest*, 413-414.
[272] Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 104-105.
[273] Morton and Roy, *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign 1885*, lxix.
[274] Stonechild and Waiser, *Loyal 'till Death*, 142.
[275] Myrna Kostash, Ed., *The Frog Lake Reader* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2009), 62-64.

retreat.[276] Big Bear's band fled from Canadian soldiers for another month, before surrendering on 4 July and effectively bringing the conflict to an end.

At least thirty-five Indigenous and fifty-three non-Indigenous individuals lost their lives in the battles of 1885. The Northwest Field Force itself suffered twenty-six deaths and 103 wounded.[277] Even by the standards of the time, this was a low casualty count. It was a truly paltry sum compared to the smallpox epidemic that struck Montreal later that same year, taking upwards of 5,800 lives.[278] In the words of historian R.C. MacLeod, "The 1885 Rebellion was a modest and moderate kind of war, a very Canadian affair in all respects."[279]

In the present day, with the full knowledge of how many Canadians were killed or wounded in the great wars of the twentieth century, it is easy to dismiss the death toll of 1885. It would be a mistake, however, to measure the influence of the 1885 conflict solely by its casualty count. Especially for those soldiers on both sides who faced death in battle and witnessed the death of their friends, the losses would have felt extremely significant. After participating in the battle of Cut Knife Creek, J.A. Forin of the Queen's Own Rifles (QOR), a Toronto-based regiment, wrote the following words:

> May 3, 1885 – Sunday: We reached camp last night at 10:30. Glad to get in, very tired – slep [sic] soundly. Thankful to God for his watchful care and protection over me. Never realized the horrors of war before. Boys very interested and anxious to hear about it.[280]

**"A Royal send-off"**

For those who participated, the conflict was very real indeed. It was also very real for those English Canadians left behind. Right from the beginning, English-Canadian civilians treated the 1885 conflict as a momentous event. The public was riveted by the exploits of the Dominion's men at arms. Thousands crowded the train stations in cities such as Toronto and Winnipeg to see

[276] Stonechild and Waiser, *Loyal 'till Death*, 184.
[277] Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada,* 106 and Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *History of the Canadian Peoples, Volume 2*, 44.
[278] Jonathan Vance, "Remembering Armageddon" in Margaret Conrad & Alvin Finkel, *Nation and Society: Readings in Post-Confederation Canadian History Volume 2* (Toronto: Pearson Longman, 2008), 202.
[279] R.C. Macleod, Ed., *Reminiscences of a Bungle by One of the Bunglers and Two Other Rebellion Diaries* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983), xv.
[280] Diary of RFN. J.A. Forin, No. 3 COY QOR, 1 JAN 1885 to 31 DEC 1885, John A. Forin Fonds, M1949 file 2, BG3 Q3, Glenbow Archives, 14.

off the troops, and thousands more gathered to welcome them upon their return. On 26 March, as he was preparing to leave for the West, Forin recorded in his diary that "Toronto is excited about it and collect in large crowds around the Barracks."[281] Lieutenant Richard Cassels, also of the QOR, recounted in his diary the reception he witnessed when his train stopped in Peterborough on its way to the front: "We find here a Guard of Honour drawn up at the stations, and as we pass they salute and cheer us."[282] The diary of Captain R.W. Rutherford of the Royal Canadian Artillery, recorded a similar scene upon his departure from Kingston:

> A tremendous crowd thronged the station to see us off. Everyone most enthusiastic…. Passed Pembroke about an hour after where there was an immense crowd to see us pass. The town band playing, etc."[283]

William James Watts of Winnipeg's 90th Rifles recorded similar excitement on his rail trip west – in his journal he notes that the troops were met "…by a large crowd and band" at their stop in Portage La Prairie, and he recounts that another band and large crowd awaited their stop in Brandon.[284] Meanwhile, the *London Free* Press described huge crowds gathered to watch the departure of that Forest City's 7th Fusiliers as follows:

> The crush was so tremendous within a block of the station that a number of policemen sent up to keep order were perfectly powerless. Four or five ladies fainted and people who were in the thick of the crowd describe the pressure on their ribs as actually painful.[285]

Captain A. Hamlyn Todd reported in his diary that on 31 March his company of sharpshooters had difficulty making their way to the Ottawa train station, "…due to the immense crowd of people assembled to give us a royal send off."[286] Todd noted the palpable sense of excitement in the air, stating that "The shock of this news [of the battle at Duck Lake] has aroused a feverish

[281] Ibid, 9.
[282] Diary of Lieut. R. S. Cassels, 2.
[283] R. W. Rutherford Diary, March 25 – December 31, 1885, Robert William Rutherford fonds, M4843 file 67, Glenbow Archives, 1.
[284] "Journal of William James Watts" *The Military Collector's Club of Canada Journal*, Volume 16, No. 2 Edition 117, Winter 1979/80, 6.
[285] Gower, Mrs. Susan, d. 1929, Scrapbook re Northwest rebellion, 1885, Edwin P. and Susan Gower fonds, M6480, PA-2962-1, Glenbow Archives.
[286] "With the Guards' Sharp-Shooters in the North-West Rebellion," A113, Innes Papers, II. Manuscripts (b) Manuscripts, 26. The Todd Diary, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, 3.

state of excitement, and it is reported, that offers of service, from all sources, are pouring in, backed by members, Parliament being in session."[287]

In his article "Celebrating the Suppression of the North-West Resistance of 1885: The Toronto Press and the Militia Volunteers," historian Ian Radforth examines the coverage of the Toronto press and argues that it directly fostered the public displays of patriotism that gripped the City at the time. Radforth concludes that these displays bolstered the militia myth:

> The press's handling of the 1885 mobilization provides a vivid illustration of Canada's militia myth in action: the people rallying behind the military because they had a popular faith in an active citizenry as the country's best defence in a time of crisis. Equally vividly it shows how a moment of militarism could spark and flicker brilliantly for a few months in 1885, 20 years before the launching of much more concerted attempts to foster and sustain militarism in Canada.[288]

There is little doubt that the Toronto press played up displays of patriotism – The *Globe* referred to King Street as "one living, moving mass of humanity" gathered to see soldiers off. The reporter claimed the space was so packed with people that "…thousands took up the most dangerous positions on the cornices at the roofs in order to get a good view of the boys as they marched past to the Union Station on their way to serve their country."[289]

Radforth's conclusions about the militia myth are perhaps nowhere better illustrated – literally and figuratively – than in the *Illustrated War News (IWN)*, a weekly publication created expressly to report on the conflict.[290] The images produced by the artists of the *IWN* were often exciting and action-packed, full of signs and signifiers to help the reader interpret events in the Northwest. Gillian Poulter, in her book *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Sport, Visual Culture and Identity in Montreal, 1840-85*, notes that the artwork in the *IWN* and other popular media became *the* definitive representation of the 1885 conflict for many English-Canadians:

> Because all three versions (weekly issues, souvenir numbers, and colour prints) were objects of mass consumption, they became a galvanizing social force; by

[287] Ibid, 1.
[288] Ian Radforth, "Celebrating the Suppression of the North-West Resistance of 1885: The Toronto Press and the Militia Volunteers," in *Histoire sociale/Social history*, volume 47, Numéro/Number 95, Novembre/November 2014, 603-604.
[289] "Gone! Tens of Thousands See Them Off", *The Toronto Globe,* 31 March, 1885, Elgin Morell Fonds, MG29 E90, LAC.
[290] *Illustrated War News*, 11 April 1885, Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, file 2, City of Toronto Archives, 10

> telling a story that, through repetition, became *the* story of the Rebellion, they became part of the "official" history of the nation. Due to the effect of this repetition, the landscape portrayed in the accumulation of images became the readers' idea of the North West.[291]

In publications such as the *IWN*, the Canadian volunteers were literally painted as the British masculine ideal. Historian Mark Moss notes that "In the eighteenth century, 'manly' meant the opposite of 'boyish' or 'childish'. By the early to middle Victorian period, the term had come to be used as the opposite of 'feminine' or 'effeminate.'[292] With the Fenian raids of the 1860s and '70s and the Red River expedition of 1870, Canadians had already shown a propensity to consider the citizen soldier as an idealized white male and a suitable focus for national pride. The images in the *IWN* further fostered this vision of Victorian white masculinity – stalwart young men facing down "savages" and fighting on, even in the face of death – giving their all for Queen and country.

Figure 6: Detail from "A Royal Grenadier's chance for a Victoria Cross." Archives of Manitoba, N12439.

[291] Gillian Poulter, *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land*, 223.
[292] Mark Ross, *Manliness and Militarism*, 28.

At the same time as the *IWN* reaffirmed the masculinity and whiteness of Canada's citizen soldiers, the media also established femininity's role in the conflict as an essential, albeit supportive one. The *Globe*, writing under the headline "A True Mother", cited the mother of a volunteer, who enthusiastically offered up her son to the cause: "I was never willing to have my son go out for mere holiday show, but when the country calls I am willing that he should be the first to respond to that call."[293] Similarly, the 4 April edition of the *IWN* featured a sketch of a soldier and a woman labelled "A Canadian Wife," who was saying to her husband "Take your discharge? Certainly not!" Radforth notes that it was very clear proscription of how a proper wife should behave.[294] Taken together, these messages about the nation, the enemy, masculinity and femininity created a powerful context within which soldiers and civilians alike would interpret the conflict of 1885. It was a context most found easy to align with their world view.

Radforth himself admits that the press could not claim sole responsibility for the outpouring of interest and support – rather, the press was riding a wave of Victorian militarism that crested in 1885 but had existed for some time. The success of the *IWN* speaks to the appetite among the English-Canadian public for stories of the conflict. The first edition of the *IWN*, published on 4 April 1885, shortly after the beginning of hostilities, noted this enthusiasm:

> The state of public feeling being such as to warrant the publication of a first-class illustrated journal, we have at considerable expense secured a large staff of artists, and in a remarkably short time have produced the results which we now submit.[295]

At least one artist was actually sent out with the troops, in order to sketch what the *War News* called "events of interest *en route* and at the front."[296] The very next week in their 11 April edition, the journal was able to declare that it felt "…greatly encouraged at the gratifying reception accorded to their enterprise by the public", noting that "The demand for copies has greatly exceeded their most sanguine expectations, and justifies the continuance of the undertaking while the present exciting times prevail in the North West."[297] The *IWN* continued to

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[293] "Gone! Tens of Thousands See Them Off", *The Toronto Globe,* 31 March 1885, Elgin Morell Fonds, MG29 E90, LAC.
[294] Radforth, "Celebrating the Suppression of the North-West Resistance of 1885," 613.
[295] *Illustrated War News*, 4 April 1885, Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, File 2, City of Toronto Archives, 3.
[296] Ibid.
[297] *Illustrated War News*, 11 April 1885, Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, File 2, City of Toronto Archives, 10

do well and even found it profitable to produce a souvenir edition in two parts once the fighting was over.

This outpouring of patriotism was not lost on the soldiers themselves. There were, of course, many reasons for Canadian soldiers to join the campaign in the West. According to Rod MacLeod, who edited the diaries of three Canadian participants, the chance to participate in an historic adventure was a strong motivator:

> Clearly the sense of taking part in unique and important events, of making history, is the primary motivating factor in these accounts…. Each saw it rather as the adventure of a lifetime, not to be forgotten in later years when memory might prove false.[298]

This sense of excitement can certainly be found in the various diaries and memoirs of Canadian volunteers in the days after the Duck Lake battle. For example, Lieutenant Cassels, once he had settled on a train heading west and had time to think, wrote the following in his diary:

> Now I can analyze my feelings about this affair, and I came to the conclusion that I am very lucky to have the chance to go. Naturally, one feels a little troubled at leaving one's friends in this indefinite way, but change is pleasant and one is sure to see something worth seeing, and then with so many good fellows with one, loneliness is scarcely to be feared.[299]

Patriotism was not absent from the diaries of the soldiers, either – J.A. Forin recorded on 29 March that he and his fellow volunteers felt it was their duty to put down the rebellion: "…Men are anxious to settle accounts with the Rebel Riel. He is causing death unnecessarily and cruelly and if it takes millions of dollars, we must quell and punish this man."[300]

Radforth argues that there were likely many reasons for enlisting, noting that "Readers of the *Mail* [a Toronto paper] in 1885 might well have wondered whether adventure, a wish to show bravery, or a fear of criticism did not play some considerable part in the Volunteers' behavior."[301] Whatever their motivations, a good number of the soldiers left behind were bitterly disappointed. On April 3, Militia Minister Adolphe Caron received a message from a private in

[298] R.C. Macleod, Ed., *Reminiscences of a Bungle*, xii.
[299] Diary of Lieut. R. S. Cassels, 2.
[300] Diary of RFN. J.A. Forin, No. 3 COY QOR, 1 JAN 1885 to 31 DEC 1885, John A. Forin Fonds, M1949 file 2, BG3 Q3, Glenbow Archives, 9.
[301] Radforth, "Celebrating the Suppression of the North-West Resistance of 1885," 612.

the QOR who had not been selected for service. He was clearly desperate to join his comrades on the campaign trail, and claimed the sentiment was general throughout the regiment:

> At long last when the long looked for opportunity had arrived; we found ourselves by the method of selection (quite proper in itself) unfortunately left at home without a grain of consolation save the fact, that we felt in remaining we were but obeying orders…. I ask you Sir, if it is not possible to afford us a chance to rejoin our comrades at the front, and in doing so I merely voice the wish of all with whom I have spoken, solely upon my own responsibility without a hint or suggestion from any one.[302]

Caron received a similar telegram from Halifax in April, when the regiment suspected that it might not leave Citadel Hill. "Battalion ready and expected orders to march tomorrow morning" read the distressed message from Lieutenant-Colonel James John Bremner, "delay most injurious and vexatious. –Can we not proceed Quebec and drill there till wanted. This, the unanimous opinion of the Officers."[303]

Career soldier Colonel George Denison would claim in his 1901 memoirs that even at the time he saw the conflict as unnecessary and unjust – an assertion supported by his personal correspondence from 1885. Denison was careful to note, however, that these views did not hinder his desire to serve his country in a time of war:

> Several of my officers came to me and asked me if I had volunteered the services of the corps. I said, "No, I had not." They asked me if I would not do so. I refused for two reasons, partly because a large force was being sent to crush a few people who had been wronged and practically goaded into rebellion, but my main reason was that if they thought I wanted to go they would certainly not send me.[304]

Almost without fail, memoirs that were published after the conflict emphasized duty and patriotism as the primary motivators of those who volunteered for service in the Northwest. R.G. MacBeth, who had witnessed the troubles in 1870 as a child and as a young man joined the Winnipeg Light Infantry in 1885, subscribed to the view that the conflict had awakened Canadians' deepest sense of patriotism and duty:

> Scarcely had the story of Duck Lake reached the seat of Government at Ottawa, when from the frowning fortress of old Quebec to Halifax away down by the sea,

[302] Morton and Roy, Ed., *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign 1885*, 89-90.
[303] Ibid, 126.
[304] George T. Denison, *Soldiering in Canada: Recollections and Experiences* (Toronto: George N. Morang and Company, 1901), 265-266.

> from the populous cities and backwoods farms of Ontario to the scattered ranches at the foot-hills of the Rocky Mountain, hosts of armed men sprang up to defend the laws and liberties of the land they loved.[305]

Charles Boulton expressed a similar view, and felt it bode well for the cohesion of the nation, both on the national and international stage:

> The rising in the North-West also brought out such a national feeling in the Government's call for troops, that will allay and anxiety in the future, and prove to all political parties, that when the interests of Canada or her national existence are at stake, the people are a unit…. This attitude of the nation has done much to raise the character of our people in the eyes of the world.[306]

Despite such claims of a universal "national feeling," not every city in Canada responded to the outbreak of fighting with unquestioning patriotism. Historian David A. Sutherland has recounted how in Halifax, the call to arms "became an immediate source of intense controversy", largely due to strong anti-Canadian sentiment that existed in the city at the time.[307] There was initial difficulty organizing a battalion to go west, as some prominent citizens publicly came out against military action. Even then, many Haligonians were still swept up in patriotic fervor. When the battalion departed the city, massive crowds cheered it all the way to the train station.[308]

During the campaign itself, appeals to patriotism and duty were used by leadership to encourage the volunteers to greater effort. William James Watts, of the 90th Rifles of Winnipeg, notes in a journal entry of 11 April that General Middleton spurred the troops through tedious and difficult marching by appealing to their sense of patriotism and duty, all the while implicitly portraying their enemies as violent and uncivilized:

> Had a very heavy march – the ground was very wet – we nothing to drink all day – marched about 25 miles – was complimented very highly on our staying powers by the General and told that we would have to march all day tomorrow so as to get across the plain. The General gave out that we were not to complain about marching as the lives of women and children depended on our hard marching.[309]

**Hard marching and hard tack**

[305] MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West*, 148.
[306] Boulton, *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellions*, 188.
[307] David A. Sutherland, "Halifax's Encounter with the North-West Uprising of 1885, *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* 13 (2010), 63.
[308] Ibid, 67.
[309] Journal of William James Watts (Submitted by Al Watts), Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum, 6.

By the time the long marches had begun, many volunteers were likely beginning to feel as though their life of adventure and excitement had been replaced by a life of discomfort and monotony. After the initial wave of patriotic euphoria had abated, the life of most soldiers in the campaign became one of tedium punctuated by cold and discomfort. For the volunteers who marched west but did not see action, it could feel particularly galling. Private William Burleigh, of No. 2 Company of the 7th Fusiliers, described his time in the Northwest as tedious and tiring:

> When we got to our destination we did nothing, only mount guard and keep on loading barges with oats and hay and take them across the river and unload them there and come back and load up again and take them across the river and unload them there and come back and load up again and take them across and that was what we did day in and day out until we left there for home; and then we had over two hundred miles to walk to the railway, which took us about ten days to do.[310]

Burleigh's discomfort was minor compared to that of many soldiers. The campaign had begun while the Northwest was still experiencing sub-zero temperatures, and volunteers faced many nights exposed to the cold. Many of these hardships happened before the volunteers had even reached the Northwest.

Regiments from east of Winnipeg had to travel west on the incomplete rail lines across the frozen lands of Northwestern Ontario. This often meant long, cold marches between the completed sections – and sometimes travelling by flatcar, exposed to the elements. The diary of J.T. Symons, of the York and Simcoe Regiment, records the challenges of this journey well. On 6 April, Symons and his fellow soldiers were en route to Port Monroe. Officers stayed in the Caboose at the end of the train, but the rank and file rode in flatcars. Symons states that "Men in good spirits and well", but followed this up with the following statement: "Riding horrible, the track being only a construction track and the rails laid on snow, the tiles buried in 2 or 3 feet below." The arrangement was very similar for the next leg of the trip as well, with added difficulties once the soldiers arrived at their destination:

> The Officers were in the warm caboose but the men, many of them with wet feet, suffered terribly from exposure and cold which at nightfall suddenly became

[310] Account of Private William Burleigh, in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, MG29 E10, LAC, 4.

> intense and to cap all when we reached Jack Fish Bay only 80 men could be messed at once, the others having to await their turn out in the cold.[311]

The diary of Frederick Marshall Kitchener, of the 10th Royal Grenadiers, reported a very similar experience, albeit with sparser prose. Kitchener described the chilly scene as he and his fellow volunteers moved on from the aptly named Camp Desolation: "Cars arrived at 1:30 standing in cold till 3, boxed up in flat cars all night no room to move & several had toes frozen."[312] Kitchener had passed through several days earlier than Symons – on 4 April – but the accounts were largely identical in nature nonetheless. Lieutenant Cassels also recorded observations about his voyage across Northwestern Ontario. He tended to wax more poetic about the landscape than either Symons or Kitchener, but on 2 April, still felt compelled to write: "The cold is very trying and renders sleep quite impossible; every now and then one is forced to take a smart run to keep one's marrow from freezing." On 3 April, after a night sleeping on open flatcars making their way west, Cassels stated that "The horrors of last night are simply indescribable." He then go on to describe these indescribable horrors in some detail:

> Soon, however, we find that it is becoming too cold to allow any interest to be taken in anything but the question how not to freeze, and even that question, in spite of the vigorous efforts of some of the more cheerful and pluckier spirits to keep men's courage up, ceases ere long to bother our poor despondent fellows. The thermometer by actual observation goes down to five below zero: the wind is biting: our cramped quarters render movement of any kind impossible, and at last we simply make up our minds to freeze.[313]

Todd of the Ottawa Sharpshooters also described the bone-chilling cold in his diary. He noted that on one six-hour march between train tracks, exhaustion became general: "As we struggled along I counted some forty men lying on the snow, some face down, played out."[314]

At the same time that Symons, Kitchener, and Cassels were struggling towards Winnipeg in flatcars, volunteers already in the Northwest were also facing hardship. In his memoir, Charles Boulton recounts an incident in April when he and his horse broke through ice while crossing a stream. He escaped unharmed but thoroughly soaked, and his clothes quickly froze

[311] Diary of J.T. Symonds, 9 April – 21 July, 1885, 1 February, 1904, Re: Northwest Rebellion of 1885, MU844, John T. Symons fonds, Archives of Ontario, 1-2.
[312] Diary of Frederick Marshall Kitchener, April 4, 1885, M-635, Frederick Marshall Kitchener fonds, Glenbow Archives, 2-3.
[313] Diary of Lieut. R. S. Cassels, 4-6.
[314] With the Guards' Sharp-Shooters in the North-West Rebellion," A113, Innes Papers, II. Manuscripts (b) Manuscripts, 26. The Todd Diary, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, 5.

due to the cold weather: "My clothes were so stiff I had to be lifted on to my horse, and I rode in that condition for six miles". Boulton explains that he eventually stopped at a house where he was able to dry out and get a change of clothes. He was also quick to add, to silence the skeptics he presumed would be in his audience, that "There is no exaggeration about the incident."[315]

MacBeth, in his own memoir, describes long, arduous marches with the Alberta Field Force. By May and June, when the main marches took place, the cold was less of a problem, but the weather and terrain ensured that the volunteers still faced hardships aplenty. MacBeth recalled one particular difficult slog he called the "silent march":

> For quite a distance our way was through water knee-deep, and through this swamp I remember how the Frenchmen of the 65th, almost shoeless and half-clad though they were, more than once helped the horses on Perry's gun, next to which they were marching.[316]

Many of the volunteers were subjected to hard marching. James Watts of Winnipeg's 90th Rifles might have followed General Middleton's admonishment not to complain verbally, but he did nonetheless record an almost daily litany of aches and pains in his journal. On Monday 6 April, after marching for eight and a half hours, three and a half of those through rain, he concluded, "It was a very tiresome march, being very wet most of the way." The next day presented new challenges, due to a drop in temperature: "Tuesday April 7 – Started at 8 a.m. Pretty cold – everything frozen up – boots like stones"[317] J.A. Forin voiced similar complaints in his diary, as his column made its way to relieve the citizens of Battleford. On 14 April, two days after starting out from Swift Current, Forin noted that "Quite a number of the men have sore feet and had to drop out." Adding to the ordeal – at least for Forin – was the barren nature of the land over which he marched. "The prairie scenery is very monotonous", he noted on 19 April, "and one only has distant hills to look at for hope of change. Buffalo tracks and bones and little slews of water are the only thing visible besides the prairie grass."[318] For many, hard marching was a feature of the campaign until the very end. Elgin Morell of the Queen's Own Rifles wrote home from North Battleford on 3 July, just one day before Big Bear surrendered:

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[315] Boulton, *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellions*, 213.
[316] MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian* West, 190.
[317] Journal of William James Watts (Submitted by Al Watts), Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum, 7.
[318] Diary of RFN. J.A. Forin, 11-12.

> We arrived here on July 1st from Jack Fish Lake. 25 miles we marched in one day. I legged every step of it I tell you it was a terror. We marched 18 miles without seeing a drop of water… as we marched from the Creek it rained & hailed all the way that is nothing we walk through anything the hail stones were as large as wash tubs.[319]

While the size of the hail is clearly exaggerated, the more general details of marching followed by more marching is supported by the scribblings of many a Volunteer.

Perhaps worse than either the marching or the scenery was the food, which became increasingly bland and limited as the soldiers moved further away from their supply base. Forin was no admirer of the hard tack that became the staple of his diet while on the march. On 9 April, while camped at Qu'Appelle station, he simply stated "Food very bad – hard tack and tea." On 17 April, after crossing the Saskatchewan, Forin called hard tack and tea "our principal food" and declared it "not fit for men expected to do our work."[320] Another soldier actually slapped a stamp on a hard-tack biscuit and mailed it home to his family in Toronto with the address written on one side and the words "All well" written on the other. A Toronto newspaper latter noted that the hard-tack made it home "in excellent condition" and was still a prized family possession more than ten years later.[321]

The environmental challenges faced by volunteers were certainly played up in artwork distributed by the *IWN* and other publications – not just in Canada, but also around the world. On 23 May, the *Illustrated London News* in England, meanwhile, carried an illustration based on a sketch by Captain H. De M. Haig – the Northwest Field Force's Assistant-Quartermaster General – entitled "Colonial Troops Marching over the Ice of Nepigon Bay, Lake Superior."[322] Although the soldiers in both images are depicted as exposed to the elements, there is none of the sense of suffering depicted by the journals of men like Symons, Kitchener, Cassels and Watts. Suffering is instead replaced by good military order and masculine strength. In the hands of the media, the challenges of climate and terrain are simply foils used to highlight the patriotism and

[319] Letter from Elgin Morrell, July 1, 1885, North Battleford, Elgin Morrel fonds, MG29 E90, LAC.
[320] Diary of RFN. J.A. Forin, 11.
[321] "A Curious Post-Card," The Daily Mail and Empire, Saturday, July 18, 1896, Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, file 25, City of Toronto Archives.
[322] "The Rebellion in the North-West Territory of Canada: Colonial Troops Marching Over the Ice of Nepigon Bay, Lake Superior." From a Sketch by Captain H. De H. Haig, R.E. Assistant Quartermaster-General on the Staff of General Middleton, C.B., Charles de Volpi's Illustrated Newspaper collection, series 1, PB-540, folder 21, Glenbow Archives.

prowess of the citizen-soldier. In the *London News* illustration, the soldiers march in organized rows, undeterred by the cold. To the left of the column, one soldier has even stopped to smoke a pipe, as if he is immune to the forbidding winter landscape that surrounds him.

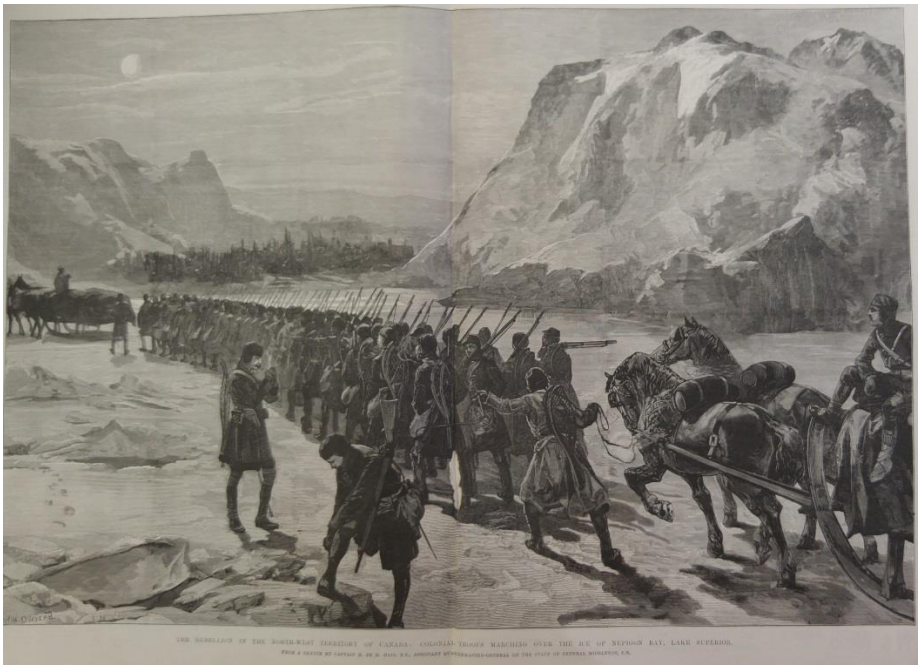

Figure 7: The Rebellion in the North-West Territory of Canada: Colonial Troops Marching Over the Ice of Nepigon Bay, Lake Superior. Glenbow Archives, Charles De Volpi's newspaper collection.

Figure 8: Detail from "A Battery Going to the Front." Glenbow Archives, Charles De Volpi's newspaper collection.

On 9 May 1885, American publication *Harper's Weekly* shared artwork based on a sketch from the *IWN* that featured Canadian soldiers struggling to pull heavy artillery through snow-covered woods.[323] The image shows soldiers striving to move a cannon stuck fast in the snow. Some push while others use large wooden sticks to help level the wheels out of the snow. Yet others urge the horses pulling the cannon forward. In the foreground, another cannon is already moving ahead, clearly indicating that this temporary difficulty will be overcome.

Both images speak clearly of British manhood overpowering natural obstacles - and by extension, conquering an "untamed" land. As with the Wolseley expedition of 1870, many of the illustrations in popular publications seemed to suggest that Canadian soldiers could justify Canadian occupation of the Northwest through the imposition of a white settler order on a wild and chaotic territory. The West would be subdued by a virile British manhood - because only this potent form of white masculinity could impose law and order on an otherwise lawless land. A headline in the *London Free* Press put it even more succinctly: "The Spirit of Patriotism and

[323] "The Riel Rebellion – A Battery Going to the Front – Drawn by T. de Thulstrup from Sketches in the Toronto "War News," *Harper's Weekly*, Charles de Volpi's Illustrated Newspaper collection, Series 1, PB-540, folder 20, Glenbow Archives.

Determination Overcomes Great Privation."[324] Poulter notes that publications such as the *IWN* visually conveyed desirable characteristics for the volunteers – order, discipline and hierarchy – while denying these attributes to the Métis and First Nations. There were clear efforts to draw a line between an ordered but muscular "civilization" and the wild, chaotic frontier that must be subdued.

The volunteers themselves sensed their "civilizing" purpose even as they headed west. Captain Rutherford, en route to Winnipeg, noted how their train passed a dog team with a First Nations guide delivering the mail: "The dog trail and the Railway side by side! Surely this shows the progress of civilization." Implicit in his observation was the notion that the railway was now bringing Rutherford and his fellow soldiers west to ensure that the progress of civilization would continue.

**"Soldiers" versus "Savages"**

The conflict between British manhood and an untamed West became even more explicit when the focus turned to the Indigenous warriors – particularly First Nations – who were opposing Canadian authority in 1885. For many of the volunteers, this was their first direct encounters with First Nations peoples. H. Bapty of the 7th Fusiliers implicitly highlighted this novelty in his diary when he casually wrote: "Passed Regina. Had breakfast at Moose Jaw. Saw Indians. Painted."[325] Most of the volunteers did not distinguish between First Nations and Métis, often using "Indians" as a catch-all term. Alex Stewart, a volunteer from Prince Albert who had been wounded at Duck Lake, spoke of Crozier and Joe McKay going out to parley with "three Indians," when two of the three were actually Métis.[326] Similarly, when Frederick Marshall wrote about in the battle of Batoche in his diary, he referred to all enemies he encountered as "Indians" – although it is far from clear whether or not that was the case.[327]

Some of the volunteers showed outright contempt for First Nations, regardless of whether they were friend or foe. J.T. Symons recorded the following observation after encountering First

[324] Gower, Mrs. Susan, d. 1929, Scrapbook re Northwest rebellion, 1885, Edwin P. and Susan Gower fonds, M6480, PA-2962-1, Glenbow Archives.
[325] Diary of H. Bapty, April 24, in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, MG29 E10, LAC, 6.
[326] Rudy Wiebe and Bob Beal, Ed., *War in the West: Voices of the 1885 Rebellion* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1985), 31.
[327] Diary of Frederick Marshall Kitchener, May 12, 1885, 6-7.

Nations people from Chief Star Blanket's band: "They [First Nations people] are a great drag to the whites, & the beauty of it is they think they are the Lords of Creation here and that the whites are mere hirelings."[328] Symons' view of First Nations as entitled and lazy was very common in all levels of white settler society. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, who also served as Superintendent of Indian Affairs, made a declaration in Parliament in 1883 that would not have looked out of place in Symons' diary: "The Indians will always grumble, they will never profess to be satisfied."[329]

Images of First Nations in the *IWN* tended to reinforce such stereotypes – a picture in the *IWN* that depicted the pillaging of Battleford by Poundmaker's band is perhaps the most explicit in this regard. The artwork features an unruly mob of First Nations warriors dancing and firing their rifles in the air in celebration. The atmosphere is one of chaos and disorder - no one appears to be in charge. In the corner of the image a man is drinking – something we never see the Canadian soldiers or Mounted Police doing in any of the *IWN*'s extensive collection of illustrations. Another man lounges under a parasol he presumably has looted from one of the Battleford homes.[330] The whole image speaks to the worst traits that white settler Canadians such as Symons and Macdonald attributed to First Nations peoples. Poulter explains that the pillaging presented a vision of "the world turned upside down":

> From the point of view of the dominant white classes, Native people in control of one of the colonists' towns and their goods was akin to anarchy – the social and racial hierarchy was inverted, and the rulers were at the mercy of the ruled.[331]

[328] Diary of J.T. Symons, 21 April 1885, 4.
[329] Canada. House of Commons, *Debates*, 9 May, 1883, 1106.
[330] "The Looting of the Old Town of Battleford," in *Souvenir Number of the Illustrated War News, Being a History of Riel's Second Rebellion, Part 1*, Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, File 13, City of Toronto Archives, 18.
[331] Poulter, *Becoming Native,* 224.

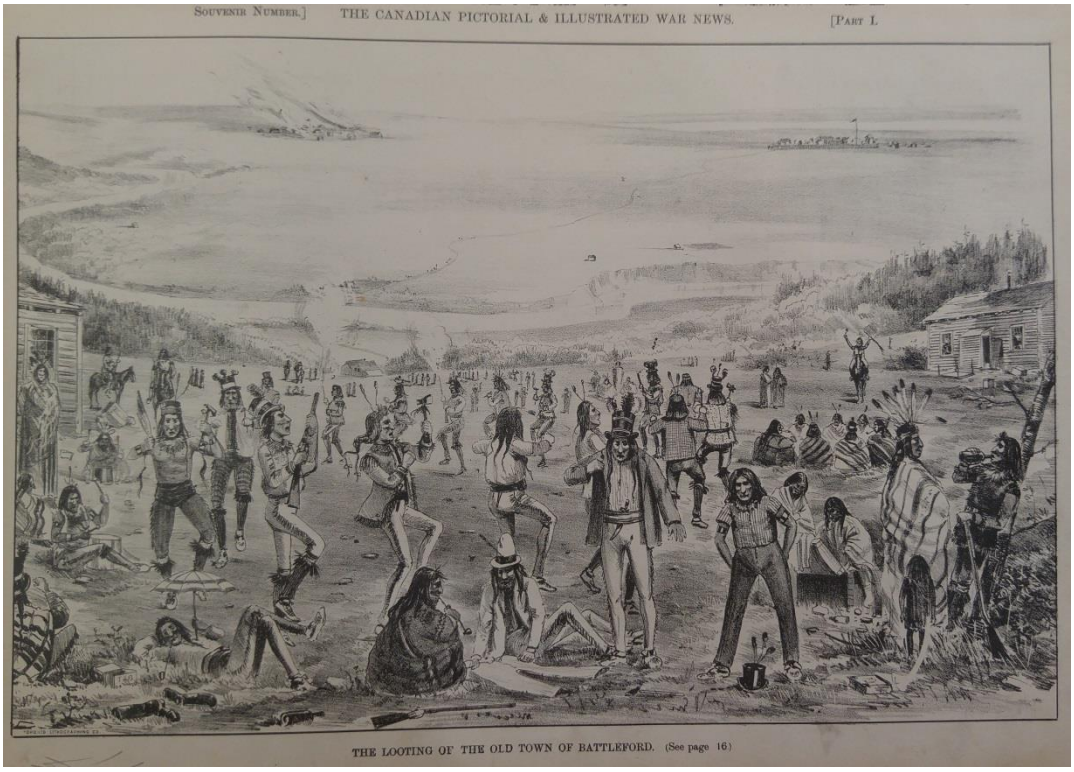


Figure 9: The Looting of the Old Town of Battleford. Glenbow Archives, Charles De Volpi's newspaper collection.

Despite the fact that the vast majority of First Nations people in the West did not join Riel's cause, the *IWN* frequently depicted First Nations people as uncivilized and dangerous – both to whites and to themselves. Such portrayals presented First Nations people as a nuisance, but a nuisance that still needed to be dealt with seriously. This attitude was not absent among the volunteers. Lt. Henry Brock, of the QOR, in a letter written to his mother while he was stationed at Battleford, not only shared the stereotypes of the lazy, ungrateful "Indian"; he went on to discuss options for dealing with First Nations people:

> They say the only thing to do is to get them when they are children, keep them entirely from their relatives and educate them, and then after two or three generations of selection and training you may get a good strain. This process, however, generally kills them, and it is a question if the American plan is not the best – exterminate them in the beginning. They have no more gratitude than an Irishman and are more cunning. The only way to keep them quiet is to increase the number of the Mounted Police who are perfectly capable of managing them if they only have a sufficiency of numbers.[332]

[332] Letter from Henry Brock to his mother, 29 April 1885, M136, Henry Brock fonds, Glenbow Archives, 2.

Now that the horrible details of Canada's Indian residential school system are finally becoming more generally known, the above passage is all the more disturbing. Even at the time, however, some soldiers were troubled by the ill-treatment of First Nations peoples. Canada First founder George Denison of the Governor General's Body Guard wrote a letter to fellow Canada Firster William Alexander Foster while on campaign, complaining about white attitudes towards First Nations:

> Unfortunately, among the white [illegible] up here, there is an element being hostile to the Indians - who think the only good Indian is a dead Indian – and who think no faith should be kept with them – these men would fire on a flag of truce, or do anything to foment an Indian War, partly out of hostility to the Indian, but principally to keep up the war so that troops may be kept here and money spent.[333]

Denison further noted in his letter that "…the Indians as a rule have behaved wonderfully well and with reasonably few exceptions have been loyal and true – and we have no quarrel with them."[334] In his diary, Lieutenant Cassels of the QOR expressed similar sentiments, writing that "The Indians often ill-treated by the Whites – cheated, cursed and oppressed…. From the Whites the Indians have learned to lie and steal." Cassels also praised the Cree language, and stated that Cree children's grasp of the language showed "…a great advance on our much-vaunted system of education."[335] Charles Boulton was yet another Canadian soldier who held a more sympathetic – though still very condescending – view of First Nations peoples. In his 1886 account of the campaign, he noted that

> With the exception of a few evil spirits, who committed some atrocities, the general demeanour of the Indians showed the white settlers that on future occasions there need not be that alarm that fills the mind having these savage tribes as neighbours.[336]

Indigenous peoples also spoke of "ill-treatment" by whites. Ninety-nine year-old Isadore Ledoux was interviewed in 1973 and was in the unique position of being both Métis and a status Indian present during the events of 1885 – though he was only eleven at the time. When Ledoux was asked about the causes of the conflict, he had a very clear answer:

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[333] Letter from Geo. T. Denison (Humboldt) to W.A. Foster (Toronto), 17 June 1885, Foster Papers: Personal Letters, MU1058, F70, Archives of Ontario, 2-3.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Diary of Lieut. R. S. Cassels, 45.
[336] Boulton, *Reminiscences*, 187.

> It was the white people. I figure there were some like sharks. And others – you know, they are a sort of arrogant people. Men, you know, who tried to overtalk the halfbreeds, you see… they were more overbearing over the halfbreeds. In fact, they belittled the people, you know."[337]

At the same time, Boulton still believed that the biggest danger of the 1885 conflict was not the Métis and their provisional government, "…but the fear that in the excitement of war and at the instigation of Riel, the whole Indian population of the country might rise" and kill large numbers of white settlers.[338] Whites who actually lived in the Northwest were terrified of such a prospect, especially after the Battle of Duck Lake. At Battleford, residents barricaded themselves inside the fort and waited in terror for an attack that never came. Inspector Morris of the NWMP sent a telegram to Ottawa on 9 April stating, "These tribes have risen and surround us on every side…. I believe it is their intention to exterminate the whites in this section."[339] Canadians in the east were no less prone to fears of massacre. Jennifer Reid notes that the perception of First Nations as inherently violent, always on the verge of committing a massacre of some sort, was common among Canadians in the 1880s:

> Canadian newspapers of the period regularly carried stories of Indian attacks on colonials in both the United States and Mexico, and headlines like "Apaches Burning and Slaying" created paranoia among nonnatives.[340]

Daniel Francis has also commented on the white settler belief that First Nations were inherently bloodthirsty. He notes that "It was widely believed by White historians that in 1885… the West had come perilously close to a general Indian uprising." Francis further explains that "Indians were seen to engage in war as a kind of vicious sport to satisfy and instinctual love of violence."[341]

If there was one event in 1885 that the English Canadian media seized upon as proof of the "savage" nature of First Nations peoples, it was the Frog Lake Massacre, which was portrayed as the greatest tragedy of the conflict. There was no denying the murder of nine white settlers – including two priests – was a heinous act. Historians Stonechild and Waiser have

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[337] Isadore Ledoux conducted by Carol Pearlstone on 21 July 1973, http://hdl.handle.net/10294/2216 (accessed 1 March 2017), Canadian Plains Research Center, Indian History Film Project, 8.
[338] Ibid, 186.
[339] Desmond Morton and Reginald H. Roy, *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign 1885*, 154.
[340] Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada*, 109.
[341] Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 65.

written extensively about the circumstances surrounding the killings, explaining how the young warriors who committed the acts had reached a breaking point. They argue that the eruption of violence was at least understandable and had been precipitated by harsh mistreatment at the hands of Canadian government representatives.

At the time, however, the murders confirmed the worst preconceptions of the English Canadian press and public – and only reinforced the myth of the lazy, violent, and dangerous Indian. One Toronto paper declared in a column entitled "Frog Lake Murderers" that "The feeling here is that too much sympathy is being felt for the rebels. They created the troubles and now reap the consequences."[342] The *IWN*, in its souvenir edition, described the killers as "very bloodthirsty" and noted that "The news of this bloodshed produced a feeling of intense anxiety," with many believing the killing might spread.[343]

Writer and suffragist Nellie McClung was just a child during the events of 1885, but she would later write about the effect of the massacre on her young imagination. "Up to that time the 'trouble' was a vague and abstract state, far away and impersonal," McClung wrote, "but now the menace had come out in the open, and the evil had assumed shape and image: painted savages, brandishing tomahawks and uttering blood-curdling cries…." Frog Lake had helped solidify the image of First Nations as depraved and bloodthirsty. McClung recalled that her mother expressed some sympathy for First Nations, stating that "[w]omen are safer with Indians than they would be with some white men," but was "talked down" by other adults with stories of atrocities in Minnesota.[344]

C.P. Mulvaney, in his history of the conflict, remarked, "It is, of course, impossible to describe the horror with which this massacre inspired public sentiment throughout Canada."[345] He further described the massacre as "one of the most cruel and treacherous in the annals of Indian warfare."[346] R.G. MacBeth, who was with General Strange's column when it arrived at

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[342] "Frog Lake Murderers," Unknown Toronto Paper, Monday June 29, 1885, Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, Acc. no. 273094, City of Toronto Archives.
[343] *Canadian Illustrated War News: Souvenir Number*, Part 1 – July 4, 1885, Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, file 13, City of Toronto Archives, 17.
[344] Myrna Kotash, *The Frog Lake Reader*, 77.
[345] Charles Pelham Mulvaney, *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885*, 89.
[346] Ibid, 96.

the scene of the killings, felt there was no excuse for the actions of the warriors. He also condemned the Métis agitators who were generally credited with urging Big Bear's band to violence:

> A look around the reserve showed how inexcusable was the rising of the Indians, who were treated so well by a paternal Government, and caused one to feel how utterly devilish was the action of those who by plausible messages had caused these easily excited and merciless savages to bite and destroy the hands that fed them.[347]

Mulvaney also blamed the Métis for fomenting an Indigenous uprising, remarking, "The demon of anarchy and rebellion becomes tenfold more horrible when he possesses the breasts of those rude tribes who have never learned to respect the usages of civilized warfare."[348] It is interesting to note that in 1869-70, the Métis had been considered by many Canadian commentators to be simple-minded and easily influenced by the wily and immoral Riel. Now the Métis were seen as smooth operators. Observers such as MacBeth felt it was they who were influencing the actions of First Nations people, who now filled the role of simple-minded stooges. This is not to say the Métis were seen as "civilized" by most English Canadians. In his book, Mulvaney dismissed Métis grievances as frivolous and unfounded: "But the Half-breeds are *always* discontented; as "Sir John" had said in Parliament, "if you wait for a Half-breed or an Indian to become contented, you might wait until the millennium."[349]

**Bravery in Battle**

If English-Canadian media generally presented First Nations peoples and the Métis as lazy, entitled, treacherous, and dangerous, Canadian volunteers were portrayed as the opposite – hardworking, humble, honest, and brave. Art in the *IWN*, much like illustrations of the Wolseley expedition, was always careful to show the order and discipline of the Canadian troops. In illustrations of combat, Canadian army soldiers were brave, even in the face of death. Images from the IWN included a single volunteer facing off against enemy soldiers on horseback and another volunteer bravely carrying a wounded comrade off the field at Batoche.[350] Sometimes

[347] MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West*, 173.
[348] Charles Pelham Mulvaney, *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885*, 89.
[349] Ibid, 18.
[350] "A Royal Grenadier's chance for a Victoria Cross," North West Rebellion 110 – 1885, N12439, Archives of Manitoba, and "A Brave Scout's Untimely End," *Illustrated War News*, Saturday 16 May 1885, Larry Becker fonds,

the perceived contrasts between the volunteers and their Indigenous opponents were made even more explicit. After the Battle of Cut Knife Hill, in which Colonel Otter had been forced to order a retreat, the *Battleford Herald* wrote the following words:

> The Indians have formed a very high estimate of the prowess of the troops, and ascribe the result of the people to their wonderful accuracy in shooting and their courage in fighting in the open, while on the other hand no Indian dare show himself long enough to take aim without endangering his life.[351]

This juxtaposition of brave volunteers and cowardly Indigenous warriors was typical of representations in the English-Canadian press. Reality was a vastly different affair. In the field Canadian soldiers found that the Indian and Métis soldiers who stood against them were both brave and determined. Father Gabriel Cloutier, recounting the battle of Fish Creek, described a Sioux warrior who charged the Canadians at the top of the coulee; the warrior would repeatedly advance forty paces toward the enemy and then retreat, jumping and shouting "…des cris de joie tout le temps" until he was shot by the Canadians.[352] Father Cloutier also noted that the Métis at Fish Creek "…conserve tout le temps un sang-froid admirable, fumant la pipe, s'encourageant, conversant et d'autres dormant au bruit du canon."[353] Gabriel Dumont, meanwhile, recounted Métis bravery and defiance in the final moments of the battle of Batoche:

> When the troops entered Batoche, they numbered several thousand; (just over 1200) our men had at first fallen back half a mile. I myself, stayed on the high ground with six of my brave fellows. I held up the advance of the enemy for an hour. What kept me at my post, I must admit, was the courage of old Ouellet. Several times I said to him, "Father, we must retreat". And the old fellow replied "Wait a minute, I want to kill another Englishman: Then I said, "All right, let us die here." When he was hit, I thanked him for his courage, but I could not stay there any longer…."[354]

Oral histories of First Nations people recall many acts of bravery at battles such as Cut Knife Hill. In a 1974 interview, Antoine Lonesinger, a Cree from the Sweetgrass Reserve in Saskatchewan, listed the warriors he knew had fallen at Cut Knife Hill. Rather than comment

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Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, file 5, City of Toronto Archives.

[351] "In Poundmaker's Camp," *Saskatchewan Herald*, Monday, May 25, 1885, Elgin Morell fonds, MG29 E90, LAC.

[352] Journal" de Mgr Gabriel Cloutier, P.A., V.G. lors d'une enquête sur les lieux après les évènements de 1885 en Saskatchewan, Séries Alexandre Taché, T5199 http://archivesshsb.mb.ca/media/75TachePDF/tache-cloutier_T55043-T55140.pdf (accessed 27 February 2017), Centre du Patrimoine, Société historique de Saint-Boniface, T55405.

[353] Ibid, T5243.

[354] "Gabriel Dumont's Account of the North West Rebellion, 1885," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 266.

directly on the capabilities of the warriors, Lonesinger gave secondhand accounts, noting: "A Metis named Sayer fought against the Indians…. This Metis used to say that the Indians were good fighters. The white man he was with said as much."[355] It was not just Lonesinger who praised the warriors at Cut Knife Hill. R.S. Cassels, who had fought at the battle, recorded the following in his diary: "Horrible looking fellows these Indians were, and they fought in a way that surprised the Police who have been accustomed to look upon them as arrant cowards."[356] In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, even the most jingoistic of English Canadians gave credit to the bravery and skill of First Nations and Métis fighters. Commenting on the battle, C.P. Mulvaney, who in other passages of his book denigrates Indigenous capabilities, grudgingly noted, "The Indians were making a great fight of it, and when chased out of one position resumed the fire in another." He still ensured his compliment was backhanded, however, stating, "Their tenacity is, perhaps, unexampled in Indian fighting."[357] Of course, the glory is greater when soldiers overcome a worthy adversary. For most of the English-Canadian media, the bravery of the Indigenous fighters only served to enhance the achievements of the Canadian troops.

While the press certainly played up the courage and nobility of Canada's citizen soldiers, there is no denying that many volunteers did show bravery in the face of combat. At Fish Creek, Private Watts of Winnipeg's 90th Rifles described in his diary how his company held its ground for many hours under heavy fire: "Rapid firing was the order of the day. We ("A" Coy) were next ordered to support the School on the right and so on for six hours. There was a perfect rain of lead on both sides."[358] Frederick Kitchener's terse description of the first day of the battle of Batoche also captures the danger faced by the troops very well. "One shot dropped in front of me & threw dirt in my face," Kitchener recorded, "moved a little to get a hard tack, two bullets grazed my left shoulder. Jack Egles struck beside me in [illegible] 90th man Killed [sic] beside me in retiring."[359] At the battle of Cut Knife Hill on May 2, 1884, Captain Rutherford of the

[355] Interview with Antoine Lonesinger conducted by Alphonse Littlepoplar on September 19, 1974. Canadian Plains Research Center, Indian History Film Project, Tape number IH-055, transcript disc 17, http://hdl.handle.net/10294/990 (accessed 28 February 2017), 6.
[356] Diary of Lieut. R. S. Cassels, 34
[357] Charles Pelham Mulvaney, *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885*, 153.
[358] Journal of William James Watts, 24 April 1885, 12.
[359] Diary of Frederick Marshall Kitchener 9 May 1885.

artillery wrote in his diary that the enemy came so close to the guns that they were firing case shot from the cannons:

> So sudden was the charge which was made evidently with a view to capturing our guns and the Gatling that the men were surprised and began to fall back when Major Short sprang forward and called out the men to follow him, they did and also some of the Police and 'C' Co who were there with us and drove them back.[360]

Lieutenant Cassels summed up his own experience of the battle – his first time under fire – in a revealing passage of his diary: "I do not quite understand as yet what my sensations really were when I first came under fire. I did not feel afraid exactly, but I certainly did feel that would be much nicer to be somewhere else."[361]

There is no doubt that the volunteers, as well as the Northwest Mounted Police, displayed courage, but Radforth notes that Toronto's newspapers dismissed any concerns about the preparedness and training of volunteers, preferring to play up their bravery.[362] While the conflict was taking place, many of the Northwest Field Force's commanders did not espouse great confidence in the abilities of Canada's citizen soldiers. Middleton himself, as a veteran of many British army campaigns, doubted the abilities of colonial troops and was contemptuous of the NWMP. Others worried less about the abilities of the volunteers and more about their fitness for a long and arduous campaign. At the start of the conflict, MP for Lisgar A.W. Ross, in a letter to John A. Macdonald, suggested drawing most troops from the Northwest itself, since "…they are inured to the climate and are accustomed to the water." He further noted, "The men you send from here will be certain in two or three days to take sick from the water and have diarrhoea."[363] Lieutenant-Colonel Guillaume Amyot of the Voltigeurs de Québec sent a telegram on 25 April similarly arguing volunteers should not be doing the fighting, if there was fighting to be had – although he did not mention diarrhoea as a reason.

> Volunteers should be used for Garrison and protection of place and ammunition. American scouts & Indian and Half-breeds doing the same kind of fight as rebels should do the fighting and attacking part.[364]

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[360] R. W. Rutherford Diary, 2 May 1885, 15.
[361] Diary of Lieut. R. S. Cassels, 33.
[362] Radforth, "Celebrating the Suppression of the North-West Resistance of 1885," 612.
[363] Morton and Roy, *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign 1885*, 30.
[364] Ibid, 204.

Amyot also worried about claims that his French-Canadian soldiers were not loyal, and wrote to Minister Caron, a fellow French Canadian, asking for a chance to prove the regiment's loyalty. In Winnipeg, he wrote "Our loyalty is suspected because we remain here so long" and requested his battalion be transferred west as quickly as possible.[365]

Colonel Denison felt that his fellow Canadian soldiers were up to the task set before them, but complained that the press was greatly exaggerating the accomplishments of the soldiers in this regard. In a letter to W.A. Foster, Denison maintained that many accounts of heroism and gallantry had been greatly exaggerated:

> The glory of the campaign centres on Batoche, and even there in the fourth day – Nor is nothing else that our force have done yet anywhere that will justify the fulsome flattery of the press, or the braggart boasting of many men who have written home letters which have been published.[366]

There seems little doubt that Canadian soldiers enjoyed, at least to some extent, the attention they were receiving from the press and the public. In a letter home, Private Thomas Booz of the 90th noted that "The 90th boys think quite a lot of that poetry, entitled, I think, "The Brave Ninetieth", which appeared in the Mail on the 5th inst."[367] The quest for glory could result in poems and songs, but it could also lead to tragedy. Denison also bitterly remarked that the few soldiers who had died late in the campaign "…had their lives sacrificed to a desire for military glory, for newspaper praise. This newspaper glorifying my dear Foster is going to be the curse of our country."[368]

**"Advance, bottle, and pull the cork"**

Not everything was battle and bravado, however; many soldiers' journals recorded a strong feeling of camaraderie and a general sense of taking part in a grand adventure. There were, of course, the usual hijinks that soldiers engage in. G.F. Apted of the 7th Fusiliers recalled sneaking past the sentry at his barracks after going out roller-skating in Winnipeg one evening. Apted noted that he and his colleagues were caught and punished, but nonetheless, "… we made

[365] Ibid, 196.
[366] Letter from Geo. T. Denison (Humboldt) to W.A. Foster (Toronto), 17 June 1885, Archives of Ontario, 2.
[367] Letter from Thomas Booz to Dave, 17 May 1885, Thomas Booz letters, P5317, file 12, Archives of Manitoba, 2.
[368] Ibid, 3-4.

up our minds that we'd have another crack at those slippery skates."[369] The next time, they bribed the sentry with a bottle of alcohol:

> When we arrived on the spot, he called out "Halt, who goes there", and one of the boys sang out, "bottle". The sentry said, "Advance, Bottle, and pull the cork"! Which we did, and got by all right, and left the bottle with him.[370]

Other soldiers were even more carefree in their approach to discipline. While posted in Winnipeg, William Burleigh, also of the 7th, simply disappeared for several days, along with three of his fellow soldiers. He noted that military police were looking for him and his colleagues, but they "…never looked in the right place to find us for we were over of the other side of the river".[371] Lieutenant Cassels of the QOR, on his return trip from the west, remarked about a stopover in Selkirk: "The 65th and Midlanders do not go to Winnipeg and we leave them at Selkirk, the Midlanders at any rate being in state of general noisy and disgraceful drunkenness."[372] Forin noted just a few days later in Winnipeg that his own regiment was not immune to the appeals of the bottle, remarking: "The boys are doing the city – their first taste of civilization for nearly 4 months. Sorry to see so much drinking but it is partly excusable."[373]

Some soldiers also engaged in a different form of mischief – flirtations and dalliances with the women. The volunteers – many leaving home for the first time – encountered young women in every community they visited. Many were willing to take advantage of their new status as Canada's defenders to appeal to the opposite sex. Perhaps the most peculiar incident was the "Brandon kissing business." On their way west, the QOR stopped briefly in Brandon, Manitoba, and was received with music and celebration. In a Toronto paper, Private T. E. Elliot reported incident as follows:

> The people stormed the train, and a string of about forty girls swarmed into the train with eatables and coffee… the boys were uproarious after the day's tear in Winnipeg and the fun of the concert, and were seized with a sort of spontaneous combustion, for every one seemed to start at the same time to kiss and hug the girls. And the girls were just as keen for it as we were, and kissed us as often as

[369] Account of G.F. Apted, in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, MG29 E10, 3.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Account of William Burleigh, The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, MG29 E10, LAC, 3.
[372] Diary of Lieut. R. S. Cassels, 81.
[373] Diary of RFN. J.A. Forin, July 16, 1885, 24.

> we kissed them. It was something terrific! The boys yelling and hugging, the girls screaming and the men of Brandon looking black in the face. Numbers of them, both men and women, were crying, the deuce only knows what for.[374]

No one appears to have asked the women of Brandon for their side of the story. While there were no other reports of mass kissing, some volunteers certainly did enjoy the chance afforded by their travels to meet young women. R.S. Cassels, who turned twenty-four while on campaign, seemed particularly fond of the opposite sex. On his return trip East, Cassels commented on the young women in several towns along the way. In Port Arthur, he actually noted one woman "…especially clad in a charming pink gown" who "played sad havoc with our young affections" and remarked that this "…leads us to think that the lighter social pleasures might be happily indulged in."[375] At another stop, in Owen Sound, Cassels noted that he and his friend and fellow soldier Harry Hume "…amuse ourselves by going in for most desperate flirtations with the fair daughters of the hamlet."[376]

Henry Brock wrote to family about the significant number of letters soldiers received from women back home – and how sometimes, several soldiers would be corresponding with the same woman. Brock was honest enough to admit that he was guilty of corresponding with several paramours himself:

> I assist Major Allan with the "mail" and am well up in the names of all those to whom letters go in Toronto and from whom. A common expression from the Major is, "Confound it, this is the fifth or sixth letter" as the case may be "to that girl. I think I'll write to her mother or she'll undermine the regiment." I'm afraid things are quite settled between my gallant Captain and Carrie Wyld, letters come and go with a frequency and regularity that is quite alarming. Even all my own true loves do not remain faithful. I'll astonish some of them when I get back.[377]

The extracurricular activities of soldiers were not simply restricted to misbehavior and the pursuit of romance. When not marching or drilling, the men found time for sport. On 18 May, while camped at Battleford, Forin wrote in his diary "The Guards have a cricket site and the QOR have a football and lacrosses, every evening we see part engaged in sport. This is the

[374] "Bussing at Brandon," April 18/85, Elgin Morell fonds, MG29 E90, LAC.
[375] Diary of Lieut. R. S. Cassels, 84.
[376] Ibid, 85.
[377] Letter from Henry Brock to Lillian Brock, 10 May 1885, M136, Henry Brock fonds, Glenbow Archives, 2-3.

finest atmosphere in the world for sport."[378] Thomas Booz of the 90th also reported on the importance of sport for the soldier camped at Battleford:

> Yesterday we had a cricket match with the QOR but got left. Only did it for the fun of the thing. On Wednesday evening they played foot ball and downed the 90th also. They are now talking of playing a game of lacrosse. Anything to pass the time and keep the regiments on the best of terms.[379]

The volunteers also connected through artistic pursuits. While on campaign, the troops also kept themselves entertained through song and performance. The *London Free Press* reported that while en route to the front, companies of the 7th Fusiliers took turns performing for their colleagues. For one show, orchestrated by No. 4 Company, the programme "…consisted of songs, recitations, and instrumental solos."[380] Writing home to Toronto on 12 April, Lieutenant Henry Brock of the QOR similarly descibed the role of music in his regiment's journey west:

> During the first ten days the songs of the men were of a lively character, "Vive la Compagnie", "Marching into Kingston", "Landlord fill the flowing bowl", etc., etc. Now the favourites are getting to be Scotch, "Hame Jean", "O love, dear love, be true", "In the gloaming", "Annie Laurie", etc.[381]

R.S. Cassels also noted the pivotal role of song in passing the time. On 16 April he wrote in his diary: "In the evening we have a little social reunion in the tent…. Songs are indulged in, but tonight we miss the sweet voice of Mr. Cunningham, whom we left at Swift Current on his way to the Rockies."[382] He also remarked that religious services – and religious music – were a regular part of soldiers' lives. His entry on Sunday 17 May emphasizes the centrality of Church service in the campaign life:

> Today we have a delightful service; the music being really very fine we indulge in Jackson's Te Deum and in very pretty chants for the benite and Benedictors. We have also four hymns and wind up with "God Save the Queen". The fame of our Services has gone abroad and a number of officers come over today. Only Baird and the Parson (Acheson) stay to dinner however.[383]

J.T. Symons, meanwhile, wrote in his diary about a fully organized concert that took place in May 1885, while encamped with his regiment at Humboldt, Saskatchewan. Although there is no

[378] Diary of RFN. J.A. Forin, 16.
[379] Letter from Thomas Booz to Dave, 29 May 1885, P5317, file 12, Provincial Archvies of Manitoba, 1.
[380] Gower, Mrs. Susan, Scrapbook re: Northwest rebellion.
[381] Letter from Henry Brock to his mother, 29 April 1885, 3.
[382] Diary of Lieut. R. S. Cassels, 18.
[383] Ibid, 43.

surviving playbill, the programme was similar to the concerts held by Wolseley's troops fifteen years before:

> Lighted a big bon-fire in front of the Calvary [sic] Lines in the Evening and held a concert. The Ball was opened by an address by Col. Denison concluding with a recitation. Then followed "Rule Britannia" by Lt. Bennell of the 12th, then some more songs and chorus, a recitation by Lt. Browning of Body Guard, and "God Save the Queen" and three cheers for the Queen and Canada. This is the first concert ever held in Humboldt and Mr. Anderson who has a telegraph office 6 miles from here which we passed on our way here and who, by the way, is an old Eglingtonite, says he has often been to a worse concert in Toronto.[384]

Even more similar to the performances of Wolseley's soldiers was a public regimental concert organized by the QOR at Battleford, on 28 May – for which the Saskatchewan *Herald* printed a playbill. It looked comparable to the playbills of Wolseley's soldiers from 1870 – although there appears to have been no minstrel shows included.[385] The concert was attended only by men, apart from one exception. In a letter written to home, Elgin Morell noted, "The Concert was splendid when the chairman said Lady & Gentlemen there was a cheer for the lady."[386]

The volunteers even composed their own songs - and sometimes created entire musicals. While stationed at Fort Pitt, members of the Winnipeg 90th Rifles wrote *The 90th on Active Service: Campaigning in the North West: A Musical and Dramatic Burlesque in Two Acts*. When they returned to Winnipeg, members of the 90th even revised and then performed the musical for citizens of the city. An introduction to the play explained that: "While stationed at Fort Pitt, some of the monotony of camp life was relieved by writing and rehearsing the following burlesque."[387]

*The 90th on Active Service* is a playful swipe at the monotony of life on campaign. Characters portrayed include privates, sergeants, generals and even war correspondents. A number of racialized stereotypes are also presented; there is "Chawlie," described as "a Negro Cook" and played by Sergeant Joseph Tees, presumably in blackface. The play also features a number of Indigenous characters, including "Weeping Dog," Chief of the "Hoolykezans" – a

[384] Diary of J.T. Symons, 25 May 1885, 9.
[385] Battleford Camp, Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Regimental Concert, Thursday 28 May, Elgin Morell Fonds, MG29 E90, LAC.
[386] Letter from Elgin Morell to Sarah, 29 May 1885, Elgin Morrell Fonds, MG29 E90, LAC.
[387] George Broughall et al., *A Souvenir: The 90th on Active Service or, Campaigning in the North West* (Winnipeg: Geroge Bishop, 1885), 2.

fictional tribe – and "Stir the Mud Quick," who is described as "a Brave."[388] While there are no Asian characters, one Private Brooks recites the "Chinee Song," which is sung in a stereotypical Pidgin English.[389] There are also no Métis in the play although they are mentioned by one volunteer complaining of the hard work, bad food, and low pay. He bemoans that after all this hardship, he is "…at last to fall beneath the rascally bullet of an ugly and illiterate Half-breed."[390] These racist stereotypes aside, the vast majority of the play details the day-to-day of camp life, albeit with stock comedic characters.

The printed copy of the burlesque was entitled "A Souvenir" – and Canadian soldiers certainly sought out as many souvenirs of their experience as they possibly could. Elgin Morell, of the QOR, kept in his scrapbook a number of souvenirs, including a tiny decorated fan he had found at Battleford, and letters he had written on birch bark and mailed home while on campaign. Morell created a painting on one particularly large piece of Birch bark. His creation lists the marches undertaken by the QORs in 1885. Around the artwork are the words "Pork Beans and Hard Tack," referring to the soldier's diet for much of the campaign.[391] Morrell even glued parts of his uniform and his medal into his scrapbook, centred around a picture of him in uniform.[392] Morell was not alone in his penchant for souvenirs, though most soldiers were not as artistic as he was. Hamlyn Todd noted that after Poundmaker had surrendered and been imprisoned "..many sought to obtain, as a souvenir his picturesque tam."[393] Todd himself procured a beautiful pipe given to him by an Indigenous man. He would later write: "In my quiet moments of reverie, the visionary curl from its bowl brings vividly back to me priceless recollections of the strenuous prairie campaign in its varied and changing stages."[394]

[388] Ibid, 3.
[389] Ibid, 9.
[390] Ibid, 21.
[391] Fan and birch bark letters, Elgin Morell fonds, MG29 E90, LAC.
[392] Uniform parts, Elgin Morell fonds, MG29 E90, LAC.
[393] "With the Guards' Sharp-Shooters in the North-West Rebellion," A113, Innes Papers, II. Manuscripts (b) Manuscripts, 26. The Todd Diary, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, 15.
[394] North West Rebellion, 1885 – Personal Narratives, Collection No. R1454, File No. VI.II, A. Hamlyn Todd, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, 15.


Figure 10: Birch bark artwork commemorating the Queen's Own Rifles' role in the 1885 campaign. Library and Archives Canada, MG29 E90.

Not all campaign souvenirs were freely given; looting on the part of Canadian soldiers appears to have been common. Immediately after the battle of Batoche, William James Watts of the 90th Rifles noted in his diary, "The Boys were all down in the village getting loot and destroying the rebel's ammunition etc." Watts was only disappointed he could not participate, stating, "Our company did not get a chance to get down to the village at all."[395] Many of these items, both looted and freely given, ended up in regimental museums. Among some of the more morbid souvenirs were pieces of the rope that was supposedly used to hang Riel, hairs from Riel's beard, and even Riel's cribbage board, which Riel had given to one of his guards.[396]

Souvenirs, sport, and song would gradually gain precedence over the memories of privation and danger. The sands of time would smooth out the rough edges of memory, and for many volunteers, the life-and-death struggle in the Northwest would soon become recalled as the halcyon days of their youth. Forty years later, Hamlyn Todd would refer to his time in the

[395] Journal of William James Watts, in "Riel Rebellion 1885," *The Military Collector's Club of Canada Journal*, Volume 16, No. 2 Edition 117, Winter 1979/80, 18, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[396] Saint Boniface Museum.

Northwest as "…happy, happy days; yet they ever linger with me, and are a sweet ineffaceable vision of the charming, and varied incidents throughout our little Campaign."[397] In Todd's memory, at least, it was a time for adventure, camaraderie, and heroism.

**The home front**

On the home front, many English Canadians saw the volunteers as national heroes and provided both material and emotional support to Canada's citizen soldiers. In Winnipeg, City Council established a Volunteer Aid and Public Relief Committee shortly after the conflict started. The Committee was charged with a fund to provide said relief, begun with a donation of $1,000 from City Council. Council also provided $4,000 of credit to the Committee, with the understanding that this amount would be paid back through private subscription. The fund was "…to be used exclusively for the relief of the wives and families of those volunteers who have been called to the front".[398] A call for donations was printed in the local paper – and the response was enough to pay for substantial aid. Perhaps the largest single donation came on 25 April: $2,500 in the name of the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company. At the same time, the Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay himself asked to be put down for a subscription of $100.[399] Other large subscriptions included $500 from the General Manager of the Manitoba and Minneapolis Rail Road and $405 from another private citizen.[400] The Fund even received out-of-province donations. Winnipeg City Council passed a motion to give thanks on behalf of Winnipeggers to Mrs. A.W. Ross and her friends (who were not identified in the motion), all from British Columbia, "…who have been instrumental in collecting & forwarding to the Province the sum of $213.60 for the volunteer aid & relief Fund."[401]

By October of 1885, the auditor's report to Council declared that the Committee had raised $9,057.25. Women played a key role in the work of the committee; the report noted that

[397] North West Rebellion, 1885 – Personal Narratives, Collection No. R1454, File No. VI.II, A. Hamlyn Todd, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, 18
[398] Motion 592, *Minutes of the Council, 1885, City of Winnipeg*, City of Winnipeg Archives.
[399] Letter from J. Wrigley, Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company, to the Mayor of Winnipeg, re: Subscription to find for the wives of volunteers, 28 April 1885, Council Communications No. 04965, 1885, City of Winnipeg Archives.
[400] Letter from John Persse, to the Mayor and Council Re: Relief Fund $500 from Manville, Genl. Manager MM Road, April 27/85, Council Communications, No. 04953, 1885, City of Winnipeg Archives. Also Letter from Treasurer of the Volunteer's Relief Fund Re: acknowledgement of $405.00 from G.H. Campbell, April 27/85, Council Communications, No. 04952, 1885 City of Winnipeg Archives.
[401] Motion 855, *Minutes of the Council, 1885, City of Winnipeg*, City of Winnipeg archives, 204.

of the $8,044.60 that had been disbursed to date, $5,978.81 was channeled through the "Ladies Association" and only $2,065.79 had been spent by the Committee itself.[402] A June report to Council further stressed the importance of the work done by the Ladies Association:

> Your Council also wish to laud the members of the Ladies Association for their earnest efforts in striving to fund the cases of necessity among the families of our volunteers. We regret to say that there are a great many who refuse to ask for assistance, and even refuse to take it, while at the same time needing it badly, on this account the Ladies have had a great deal of work in finding out these cases and have done it well for which they deserve the thanks of the whole City.[403]

The report noted that despite reluctance from some recipients to accept help, the Fund was still spending about $600 per week, with each recipient family receiving about $4 per week. As the campaign wore on, the fund was used not just to help the families of volunteers, but also to send supplies to the volunteers themselves. On 15 May, just days after the fall of Batoche, money from the committee was used to send members of the 90th Battalion and the Winnipeg Field Battery thirty-one dozen white cotton towels, eight dozen check towels, five dozen sets of braces, fifty suits of under clothing, sixty dozen shirts, thirty-five dozen mosquito nets, and sixty dozen socks, for a total cost of $428.52. The cost was actually lower than the total cost of the goods, because the merchants involved donated the under-clothing for free.[404] On the first of June, the Committee sent more goods to the front. This time is was oranges, lemons, port wine, claret, assorted fruits, and jelly that went to wounded volunteers convalescing in the hospital at Saskatoon. Last but not least, the Committee paid to transport home the bodies of Winnipeg volunteers who had died in the battle of Fish Creek.[405]

Winnipeg's Committee was not the only one established. Radforth notes that aid groups were also set up in Toronto and, as in Winnipeg, women were at the forefront of the effort. The Ladies Volunteer Supply Committee was everywhere in the papers, collecting and preparing supplies for the lads at the front. Its patriotic efforts were even a subject of art in the *IWN*.[406] Women's organization also involved themselves in the moral lives of soldiers; on 13 April, the

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[402]Re: Audit of Volunteers Relief, Oct 5,/85, Council Communications, No. 05243, Box No. A120, 1885, City of Winnipeg Archives.
[403] The Report of the special Committee on volunteer Aid & Relief as adopted by the Council as follows, Winnipeg, 6 June 1885, in *1885,* City of Winnipeg Archives, 229
[404] Ibid.
[405] Ibid.
[406] *Illustrated War News*, 9 May 1885, North West Rebellion 74 – 1885, N12403, Archives of Manitoba.

President and Secretary of the Women's Christian Temperance Union of Quebec city asked the Minister of Militia "…to prevent troops going to the North West from taking alcoholic liquor in the Stores, except in such small quantity as may be required for medicinal purposes." They noted their concern was borne of patriotism, for they feared that the soldiers might pick up "…habits of intemperance which in the future tend to their own [undoing] and that of the country they are now fighting for."[407] For English Canada's upper middle classes, concern for the troops in the Northwest had become a *cause célèbre*. Everyone was anxious to display their support publicly, whether they were individuals or private companies.

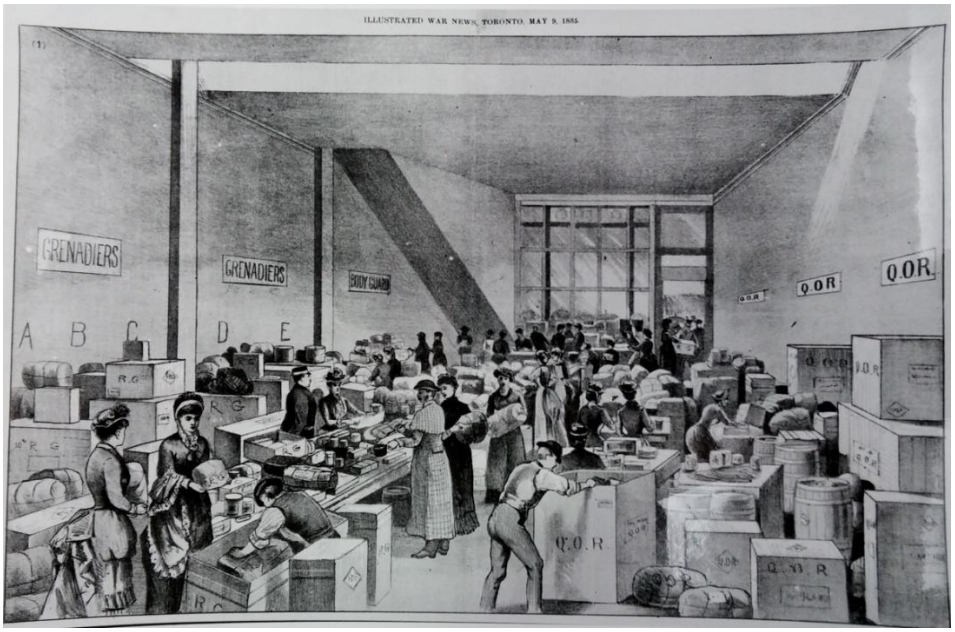


Figure 11: Women preparing packages for Toronto volunteers. Archives of Manitoba, N12403.

Some businesses also chose to donate aid directly to the troops instead of going through the committees. On Friday, 3 April, S. Davis & Sons offered to furnish the troops going to the front with 10,000 of their Cable Cigars as a gift.[408] Geo. B Tuckett & Sons of Winnipeg, meanwhile, wrote to the Mayor offering a donation of "Sufficient Myrtle Navy tobacco to give each Volunteer a pound".[409] Others merchants were more public regarding their generosity. P. Jamieson, of Palace Clothing House at Queen and Yonge streets, took out several ads in Toronto papers declaring that returning troops would be given a discount of twenty percent on all

[407] Morton and Roy, *Telegrams of the North-West Campaign 1885*, 171.
[408] Ibid, 80.
[409] Letter from Geo. B Tuckett & Sons to Mayor Hamilton Re: Tobacco for Volunteers, April 2/85, Council Communications, No. 04932, City of Winnipeg Archives.

"…Tweeds, Clothing, and Gents' Furnishings". The largest of these ads featured a cartoon version of General Middleton carrying a diminutive Riel – who was dressed as Napoleon – away to prison by the scruff of his collar.[410]

English Canadian children were also riveted by the deeds of the soldiers. Nellie McClung later described how her school had a map of the Northwest on the board in order to follow the movement of the troops, and how she and her classmates discussed daily newspaper articles about the conflict "before and after school and at noon hour."[411] She also recalled that "[a]t noon, we played one game and one game only. Indians and soldiers." McClung noted that the children playing the Indians would be fired upon even when they were "holding a parley with the Government forces led by Bert Ingram who was General Middleton."[412]

**Victory and defeat**

At the end of the campaign, the public also involved themselves extensively in grand receptions for the returning Volunteers. The City of Winnipeg's estimates for the year ending 30 April 1886 included a "Reception to Volunteers" line, with an estimated expenditure of $600.00 – by comparison, estimated for celebrating the Queen's birthday were only some $50.00, and the reception for the Manitobans who had participated in the Nile expedition of 1884-85 was only estimated at $200.00.[413] A newspaper account for 15 July described the City as "ablaze with bunting." The author described elaborate arches spanning Main Street at intervals, noting that they"…look splendid with appropriate mottoes. Main Street… is one blaze of flags, banners and other insignia of welcome and rejoicing."[414] R.G. MacBeth would also remember his regiment's 15 July reception in Winnipeg fondly, noting the sheer numbers of those who came to welcome them back:

> The train seemed to push its way through a living mass of men, women and children at the station, and it had scarcely stopped when the cars were besieged by

[410] *The Toronto Globe*, 22 July 1885, in Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, accession 273904, City of Toronto Archives, 3
[411] Kotash, *The Frog Lake Reader*, 131.
[412] Ibid, 132.
[413] *Estimates: The City of Winnipeg, for the fiscal year ending 30th April, 1886*, City of Winnipeg Archives.
[414] "Ablaze with Bunting, Winnipeg's Welcome to the Returning Troops." In *Toronto* Globe, N.D., in Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, accession 273904, City of Toronto Archives.

> such a throng that the disembarking soldiers could scarcely find room enough to form up.[415]

In London, Ontario, the Forest City received its home regiment – the 7th Fusiliers – in grand style. The diary of W.D. Mills recalls that the women of the City placed flowers in the muzzles of their rifles as they marched through a series of processional arches constructed in honour of their return:

> We arrived at drill shed in due time. It was beautifully decorated. We were served with refreshments and dismissed… We assembled at the drill shed at 7.30 as per orders for the purpose of attending a banquet given by the Citizens of London. To all Fusiliers the banquet was free – 1.00 for any one else. About 600 attended. Speeches were made by prominent citizens – W.E. Meredith, M.P., C. McMullen, M.P., Col. Walker, Col. Williams. Some excellent singers favored us with songs – namely Wm. Skinner, Capt. T. Robson, Mr. De la Hooke and others.[416]

In Toronto, a committee – along with a number of sub-committees – was set up by the City to "make arrangements for the reception of the volunteers." Initially there was disagreement about how to welcome the returning soldiers, and the *Globe* stressed the need for unity:

> The all essential thing after all is that a demonstration which shall unmistakably show that the people are not unmindful of the sacrifices and dangers incurred by our citizen soldiers, and unite in paying them the tribute of admiration and welcome.[417]

As each regiment entered the City, a new series of celebrations would begin. Many prominent Toronto citizens were concerned with honouring every regiment that passed through the city, and not just the local boys. Ian Radforth notes that Quebec's Voltigeur regiment allowed the Toronto press to "…make a show of nationalism by celebrating the pan-Canadian enterprise that had suppressed the resistance."[418] The greatest thanks were still saved for the hometown heroes. According to the *Globe*, preparations for welcoming Toronto regiments were the most elaborate:

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[415] MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West*, 206.
[416] Diary of W.D. Mills, in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, MG29 E10, LAC, 103.
[417] "The Volunteers' Reception," N.D., *Toronto Globe*, in Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, accession 273904, City of Toronto Archives.
[418] Radforth, "Celebrating the Suppression of the North-West Resistance of 1885," 628.

"The decorations at the present time are so general and so elaborate as to put to shame the tawdry ones of Sunday when the men were expected."[419]

Preparations for the volunteers' arrival actually extended beyond the city limits. A luncheon committee was organized to furnish lemonade, iced milk, and iced water to the volunteers once they arrived in Owen Sound, along with 100 copies of each of the Toronto daily papers. The committee was also charged with organizing a luncheon for the troops in Orangeville "or other convenient point" before their arrival in Toronto.[420] Back inside the city, all sorts of fêting and entertainment was planned and executed. On Dominion Day a grand reception and benefit was held in Lorne Park to "Our Batoche Heroes, under the auspices of the wounded grenadiers." There were games, music and dancing – and an effigy of Riel was even burned at the event.[421]

In the mind of John A. Forin of the QOR, the City's reception efforts were successful. His diary notes warm receptions in Selkirk, Winnipeg and Owen Sound – but when he arrived home to Toronto, he was particularly impressed:

> Got into Toronto where the reception was something, quite bewildering, thousands upon thousands met us and one continuous deafening cheer went up along the whole line of march…. Something I will never forget.[422]

He was not alone in his feeling. Writing in his memoir more than twenty years later, George Denison would recall the massive reception in Toronto as completely out of proportion to the achievements of the volunteers:

> We marched through the streets for about four miles, and there must have been from 100,000 to 125,000 out to see us. What struck me was the most extraordinary enthusiasm of the people. We had only done our duty, we had been successful in what we were sent out to do, but some checks had been sustained and the enemy was weak in numbers, resources and everything. The hardships

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[419] "Nearing Home: The Troops on the Way to Toronto," in the *Toronto Globe*, N.D., in Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, accession 273904, City of Toronto Archives.
[420] "The Volunteers' Reception: How the Citizens' Committee Intend to Do the Thing Up," 30 June 1885, *The Toronto News*, in Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, accession 273904, City of Toronto Archives.
[421] "Grand Reception and Benefit to our Batoche Heroes," in *The Toronto Globe*, N.D., in Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, accession 273904, City of Toronto Archives.
[422] Diary of RFN. J.A. Forin, 25.

> and distances marched and privations had been great, but if we had been returning from a second Waterloo, concluding a long and anxious war, we could not have been received with greater warmth.[423]

There were, unsurprisingly, no equivalent celebrations on the losing side. Dumont's account of the conflict ends with his flight to the United States after the Battle of Batoche. For those who surrendered, there were trials. For the Métis participants, only Riel's trial would end with execution. For First Nations, the aftermath of the conflict would see eight men hanged for their roles in the Frog Lake Massacre. To this day, it is the largest single execution in Canadian history.[424] Even for those who were not arrested, later oral histories would remember hardship and suffering both during the conflict and in the wake of the defeat.

The immediate aftermath of the conflict was particularly brutal for those who had resisted Middleton's forces. On 14 May, two days after the Battle of Batoche had ended, Frederick Kitchener wrote of "…bodies of Indians & half breeds laying about." He also saw Indigenous women, but stated that Canadian soldiers left "…squaws and their tents unmolested."[425] There is no doubt that Indigenous women suffered in the wake of the defeat, however. While there were few women and children on the Canadian side who experienced the conflict directly, their Métis and First Nations counterparts often found little separation between the home front and the front line. Rose Létendre was a very young child during the Battle of Batoche. She would later tell her son about leaving the community at night with her mother to escape the fighting. Along with other women and children, they dug caves into the bank of the South Saskatchewan River in which they hid during the fighting. Conditions in the cave were less than pleasant:

> The children were cold and frightened. Some of the old people got really sick. Others were brought to the caves so that they could be cared for. My mother and other women knew enough about Indian medicine and so they cared for them. Some of those who were brought to the caves were dead so they had to be made ready. Those families who's [sic] men that were brought in the caves cried for their loved ones. We also shared in the crying. They were our relatives.[426]

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[423] Denison, *Soldiering in Canada*, 328-329.
[424] Stonechild and Waiser, *Loyal 'till Death*, 223-225.
[425] Diary of Frederick Marshall Kitchener, 14 May 1885, 7.
[426] "Létendre, Rose, Story," Gabriel Dumont Institue, Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture, N.D. http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/01075.VM%20-%20Rose%20L%C3%A9tendre%20story%20(A%20T).pdf (accessed 4 March 2017), 3.

Létendre stated that after several weeks in the caves, she returned to Batoche to find her home was one among many that had been burned down. Of the Canadian soldiers, Létendre said: "…they wrecked not only our homes, but they wrecked our dreams. Batoche was our homeland." With nothing left, her family moved west to Alberta, where she was called a rebel and a traitor by the other children at school.[427] Mrs. Adelaide Ranger, interviewed in 1973, recalled hearing similar stories of destruction and flight from her parents:

> Adelaide: (translated) Yeah, Dad used to talk about it, and especially my mom used to talk about the Rebellion – she told me about how she had run away. At Bellevue there is a big hill and she said she went up there and she had to carry her kid. And when they stop, they had to come back, they all come back, you know.[428]

Ranger further explained how her parents' home was also burned down by Canadian forces, saying: "They lost everything, but my mother had been lucky enough to think of bringing a trunkful of clothes to the church here. And they were able to save that."[429]

Isadore Ledoux also recalled the chaos of defeat. He had been present at Batoche and his family fled during the battle. Ledoux confirmed Ranger's stories of how after the defeat, women and children became refugees. In a written statement, he also recalled that many of the men were now fugitives. Ledoux described fleeing Batoche and taking shelter at a place his mother called Labcan settlement:

> We were there five or six days when the men began straggling in – among them, my father. He said the Rebellion was over. Sure enough, four days after the men's return, a platoon of police came marching up the road. They were met by a crowd of chattering women. The police stayed perhaps an hour, then marched away again. Where were the men? I don't know. They simply disappeared. All I know is that we were having dinner when somebody outside yelled 'The police are coming!' My father shot out of the tent and I did not see him again until about half an hour after the police had left.[430]

Equally interesting was the reception Ledoux and his family received when they returned to their reserve. They found the Canadian authorities already trying to enforce their narrative of events among the reserve population, which resulted in the following exchange:

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[427] Ibid, 4-5.
[428] Mrs. Adelaide Ranger interview, 19 July 1973, Canadian Plains Research Center, Indian History Film Project, http://hdl.handle.net/10294/2279 (accessed 28 February 2017), 4.
[429] Ibid.
[430] Isadore Ledoux Interview, 21 July 1973, Canadian Plains Research Center, Indian History Film Project, http://hdl.handle.net/10294/2216 (accessed 1 March 2017), 7.

> Soon after their return, the Indian agent came to Muskeg along with several others. They gave a long speech about the crime the chief had committed in leading his people to fight our Queen. Someone who spoke English told the Agent, 'We were not fighting the Queen, we were fighting the police,' I'm repeating what my father told me after the meeting. The Agent said, 'It's the same thing, when you fight the police, you are fighting the Queen.'…. Then he stripped our chief of his rank as chief in retaliation for the part he played in the Rebellion. The Agent said the Indian Department had cut off all help from the agency. Then the meeting broke up.[431]

Ledoux speculated that in cutting off aid, the Agent might have been hoping to starve the reserve, but stated that through hunting and gathering, everyone was fed. He also noted that the Federal government would not recognize another chief until 1922.

Canadian soldiers recognized that Indigenous peoples often saw the conflict in different terms than their white settler counterparts. Hamlyn Todd witnessed the surrender of Poundmaker to Middleton and recorded the event in his diary. He noted that at one point during the ceremonies, Poundmaker, "…with gracious smile, extended the right hand of fellowship," but was refused by the General:

> The dignified look of astonishment on the Chief's face was a study. Returning to his former position on the grass, a row of squaws immediately behind him, broke out into angry and loud chatter, quite unseemly to the dignity of the occasion, doubtless in protest of the treatment of their lord. Upon this, Poundmaker turned towards them, uttered a monosyllable, and instantly there was dead silence.[432]

Middleton's refusal to take Poundmaker's hand, and the ensuing shock of Poundmaker and his entourage, spoke volumes about the very different understandings of 1885 that was held by white Canadians and Indigenous peoples. Many Indigenous peoples did not see the conflict in the black-and-white terms of loyalty and rebellion. They maintained, as had the First Nations individual on Ledoux's reserve, that even if they were fighting, they were not fighting the Queen. But Canadian authorities had a very different idea.

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, the Métis and First Nations people who had opposed the federal troops could not afford the luxury of commemoration. In the months and years to come, English Canada would forge a collective narrative of 1885 through medals,

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[431] Ibid.

[432] With the Guards' Sharp-Shooters in the North-West Rebellion," A113, Innes Papers, II. Manuscripts (b) Manuscripts, 26. The Todd Diary, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, 15.

monuments, memoirs, and reunions that would focus all glory on the nation's brave volunteers. Some elements of the conflict – such as the monotony and the hardship of soldiering, which loomed so large in diary entries and in initial accounts of the campaign – would gradually fade away in the collective memory of English Canadians. Other elements, such as the bravery and patriotism of the soldiers, would receive ever-greater attention from both veterans and the English-Canadian public in the coming years. For many of the volunteers, however, the memories that would stand out most prominently in the decades to follow would be the sense of camaraderie and fellowship they had developed on the campaign trail. Memories of 1885 would become increasingly positive as the volunteers aged. Over the years many soldiers would seek out other veterans in order to reaffirm these memories and reminisce about the exciting moment in their lives in which they were the nation's saviours.

For Indigenous peoples who had stood against the Canadian soldiers, the immediate aftermath of the conflict would not be about celebration, or even somber commemoration – it would be about survival, both physical and cultural. Indigenous peoples would survive, and so would their narratives of 1885. Indigenous communities would celebrate their own veterans and maintain a narrative about free peoples protecting their rights. When they did interact with white settler Canadians, Indigenous veterans would try to make their voices heard, and challenge the English-Canadian narrative of violent and brutish Métis and First Nations who were easily provoked into rebellion. Some Indigenous people even felt a duty to set the record straight, and make the case for those who had fought the Canadian state in 1885. Despite such efforts, it was to be a very long time before the Indigenous narrative of 1885 would have a strong voice in wider Canadian culture.

## Chapter Four

### Monuments, Medals and Memorials: Collective Memory in the Wake of 1885

For many Canadians, Colonel Arthur Trefusis Heneage Williams was the single greatest hero of the Northwest campaign. In 1885 he was the Member of Parliament for the Ontario riding of East Durham and a long-serving officer in the Canadian militia. When the conflict began Williams was given command of the Midland Regiment and sent west to fight. He was credited with leading the charge that won the battle of Batoche and ended Riel's resistance. This alone would have been enough to make him a hero, but sadly his fame was to be further enhanced by martyrdom; On 1 July, while still on campaign, Williams fell ill and never recovered, passing away just a few days later, on 4 July.[433]

R.G. MacBeth would later recall that when Williams' body was brought into Fort Pitt "…many a stalwart form heaved with emotion, and on many a sun-bronzed cheek the tear was seen".[434] But MacBeth was not the only individual prone to lament the loss of Williams. All of English Canada was grief-stricken by the loss of Williams, who was now being called "the hero of Batoche." The *Hamilton Spectator* wrote, "The death of Lieutenant-Colonel Williams is among the most deplorable results of the North-West rebellion." The *Montreal Herald*, meanwhile, noted that "Few men were more deservedly popular than Colonel Williams." Many papers, such as the *Peterborough Examiner*, lamented that his death had come so closely on the heels of victory: "He died when his toils were apparently over, and when worthily won honours and rest seemed about to be worn and enjoyed."[435]

Large funerals were held for many of the other soldiers who died on campaign; in Winnipeg, City Council attended as a group the funerals of two fallen members of the 90th Rifles, declared that all flags in the city were to fly at half-mast, and asked city businesses to close their doors for the occasion.[436] The funeral of Colonel Williams, however, was without a doubt the most spectacular memorial to any of the conflict's fallen. Held on 21 July in his hometown of Port Hope, it was a gala event, attended by a who's who of Canadian high society:

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[433] Desmond Morton, "Williams, Arthur Trefusis Heneage," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/williams_arthur_trefusis_heneage_11E.html (accessed March 23, 2017).
[434] R.G. MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West*, 203.
[435] "The Honoured Dead," *Toronto Globe*, Accession 273904, City of Toronto Archives.
[436] Motion 731, *Minutes of the Council, 1885, City of Winnipeg*, City of Winnipeg archives, 169-170.

the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, MPs, MPPs, judges, and even the American Consul. Also in attendance was a firing party of 300 men with three rounds of blank ammunition, along with the rest of the regiment Williams had commanded. As with the Winnipeg funerals, the Mayor of Port Hope had ordered all stores closed and prohibited any vehicle traffic on the streets of town until after the funeral.[437]

Funerals were one of the first forms of public memorialization that occurred after the Northwest Field Force had returned home from the campaign trail, but they were certainly not the last. This chapter will provide an overview of how English Canadians commemorated veterans in the aftermath of the 1885 conflict. It will look at the medals, monuments, and public events that were given out, built, and organized to craft a narrative of brave citizen soldiers who helped Canada take its place on the world stage. The actions of veterans – both as individuals and as groups – will also be examined, to show how they worked to craft their own narrative of events and to insert their memory into the public discourse – and how their narrative encouraged other veterans, such as the veterans of 1870, to seek further recognition. This chapter will also look at how Métis and First Nations communities remembered the conflict and commemorated their veterans. As the years passed, Indigenous communities slowly began to contest the citizen-soldier narrative dominant in English-Canadian society. By the end of the First World War, however, most of the country was still firmly enthralled with the Canadian volunteers who had marched west so long ago. Some imbued conflict with even more importance, claiming the volunteers had saved Canada from being torn asunder. Still others would place 1885 in the company of larger conflicts such as the Boer War and the First World War, creating an imperial narrative in which Canadians played an important role. It would only be after the First World War that the volunteers' heroic narrative would face serious challenges to its dominance in English Canada.

**The "pluck and bravery" of the citizen soldier: Medals for Canada**

In the immediate aftermath of 1885, there was no doubt in English Canada as to who was the hero: the brave volunteers. Well-attended funerals for the glorious war dead were only the tip of the iceberg. In fact, before the conflict had ended, the federal government had already

[437] "Order of Proceedings for the Military and Civic Funeral of the Late Col. A.T.H. Williams, M.P.," in MU5442, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, Ontario Historical Society Scrapbooks, Archives of Ontario.

begun to look into the possibility of procuring medals for the volunteers. In May 1885, before the conflict had even ended, the Governor General wrote to the Earl of Derby requesting a medal for service in the Northwest, suggesting it would encourage Canadians to volunteer for future "Imperial service."[438] The medals were minted in England and shipped over to Canada by Charles Tupper – whose son had served among the volunteers – acting on behalf of the federal government. The medals were awarded to all Canadian soldiers who had served west of Port Hope – the initial run was 5,250 medals, shipped to Ottawa in April 1886. The Canadian government insisted on a further distinction in addition to the medals themselves:

> …he [the Minister of Militia and Defence] consider, however, that in the interests of the force, and to promote its efficiency, a distinction should be made between those officers and men who were under fire and those less fortunate than their comrades, who were not engaged in any action.[439]

This move emphasized the heroic status of the "fortunate" volunteers who seen combat. The award ultimately came in the form of a clasp inscribed with the word "Saskatchewan." It was issued to soldiers who had been present at the "actions" of Fish Creek, Batoche, Cut Knife Hill and Frenchman's Butte. Some 2250 clasps were shipped to Canada in May 1887.[440]


Figure 12: The Northwest Canada 1885 service medal. Archives of Manitoba, MG16 C6-37.

[438] *Military General Service 1793-1814 Canadian Recipients, Egypt Medal, 1882-1889, Canadian Recipients and North West Canada, 1885* (London: Spink, 1975), 43.
[439] "Minister of Militia and Defence to Your Excellency in Council," 13 December 1886, in Regulations Governing Issue of Northwest – Medal & Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 1, LAC.
[440] "North West Medals – 1885" 1898, in Regulations Governing Issue of Northwest – Medal & Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 1, LAC.

The government also provided, through an Order-in-Council, a grant of a free homestead "…for each member of the enrolled militia force actively engaged and bearing arms in the suppression of the Indian and half-breed outbreak, and serving west of Port Arthur…", but the real attention was focused on the medals, and the medal-wearers.[441] Over 10,000 people are reported to have filled Queen's Park in Toronto on 12 May 1886 – the first anniversary of victory at Batoche - to see 500 veterans receive their decorations. One paper declared with somewhat tortured prose that "The twelfth day of May is one that will ever be a red letter one in the Canadian calendar":

> In her twentieth year, during her infancy has the Canadian nation shown an ability to grapple with rebellion and treason; and electrified the civilized world at the rapidity of mobilization, endurance, pluck and bravery of her citizen soldier in meeting and crushing red-handed rebellion.[442]

The Northwest service medal was the first medal ever awarded to Canadian troops for military service to the Dominion and it was a highly coveted item. Groups outside the Northwest Field Force also wished to be recognized for service to their country. In 1887 medals were awarded to the civilian crew of the *Northcote*, a river steamer that had come under fire at the battle of Batoche. As early as July 1886 Adolphe Caron wrote to the Governor General asking that the Northwest Mounted Police who had served in the campaign also receive medals. The Governor General then wrote the Colonial Secretary requesting the same.[443] By 1888 medals were being issued, although initially only those policemen who "…were actually under fire during the said troubles" were eligible.[444] It was only in 1900, after much petitioning by the press and government representatives in the Northwest Territories, that a federal Order-in-Council finally extended the medal to all policemen who had served in the conflict.[445] As well, in 1889, a request was sent for the Prince Albert Volunteers, some of whom had fought at Duck

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[441] "Extract from Militia General Order No. 16, dated 24 July 1885," in Regulations Governing Issue of Northwest – Medal & Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 1, LAC.
[442] "Decorated! Honouring Our Gallant Volunteers," May 13, 1886, Newspaper clipping in the scrapbook of Edwin Morell, MG29 E90, Edwin Morell fonds, LAC.
[443] "War office to the Colonial Office," 7 Sept. 1886, in Regulations Governing Issue of Northwest – Medal & Reel, RG24, vol. 5916, file no. HQ-51-4-64, LAC.
[444] As quoted in Donald J. Klancher, *The Northwest Mounted Police and the North West Rebellion* (Kamloops: Goss Publishing, 1999), 81.
[445] Ibid, 87.

Lake, to receive medals. The request was accepted, and 100 extra medals were minted and sent over from Britain for that purpose.[446]

The popularity of the 1885 volunteers inspired other militia veterans – including the Red River veterans - to seek greater public recognition for themselves. In the 1890s, a campaign began to demand the granting of a general service medal to veterans of both the 1866 Fenian Raids and the 1870 Red River expedition. In January 1894, the Queen's Jubilee Citizens Committee of Toronto appointed a group to report on the necessary steps "…to obtain a medal or other suitable decoration to be awarded to the Canadian militia who took part in the Campaigns of 1837, 1866 and 1870."[447] In the years that followed, a concerted medal campaign expanded well beyond Toronto. In May of 1897, a memorial from the people of Canada to the Queen was presented to the Governor General. Presented by both a Toronto and a Montreal delegation, the memorial was a very fancy affair, "…bound in an exceedingly handsome style…. the volume was in full royal purple morocco with extra gilt back and edges."[448] In addition to being visually arresting, the memorial had been signed by over 700 individuals, including the lieutenant governors of the provinces, federal and provincial ministers, mayors and even wardens of counties, and boards of trade. The Red River Expedition Association described the petition, not unreasonably, as "…a truly national representative Memorial."[449]

At least one petition made specific reference to the medals awarded to the 1885 volunteers as a precedent justifying the request for a general service medal, stating:

> For the campaign of 1885 Your Majesty was graciously pleased to bestow a special medal, which is proudly worn by those who were fortunate enough to win it, but for the other campaigns no decoration has ever been issued.[450]

On 1 June 1897, the Privy Council in Ottawa recommended the creation of a general service medal, based in part on "…the very numerously signed petitions" the government had

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[446] Lord Knutsford to Lord Stanley of Preston, 1st March 1889, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, LAC.
[447] "The Queens Jubilee Citizens Committee, City Hall, Toronto, 8th January 1894," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.
[448] "The memorial," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 38.
[449] "Representing the Red River Expedition Association, 1870," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.
[450] "To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.

received.[451] The majority of the report focused on the veterans of the Fenian Raids, but it is worth noting that the 1885 volunteers, just as in the petition, were used as the standard by which all other militia were to be judged. The report stated "…a recognition should be made thereof similar to that of the Force engaged in 1885 in the suppression of the rebellion in the Northwest Territories."[452] Ultimately, the Minister of the Militia recommended medals not just for the Fenian Raids, but also for the 1870 Red River expedition:

> The Minister further states that the matter was referred to the General Officer Commanding the Militia of Canada for report upon the request set forth in the petitions, and the report of that officer is submitted herewith, in which he states that upon careful consideration he is of opinion that the military operations of 1866 and 1870, and the Red River Expedition of 1870 were of a sufficiently serious nature to warrant a request being made for the mark of recognition prayed for by the petitioners.[453]

By October of 1897, the Colonial Office reported that the Queen had approved a general service medal to all those still living who had served in the field "…in repelling the Fenian Raids in 1866 and subsequent years and in the Red River Expedition of 1870." It was further recommended that three different clasps be designed to go with the medal, indicating whether the participant served during the 1866 Fenian Raids, the 1870 Fenian Raid, or the 1870 Red River expedition.[454] Despite official approval, there were long delays in the production and distribution of the medals, much to the chagrin of the veterans. By March of 1899 proposed medal recipients – including the Red River veterans – were publicly expressing their frustration at the long wait.[455] An article in the *Toronto World*, entitled "Official Procrastination," declared that the veterans had "…just cause for complaint against the Department of Militia for the delay that has occurred in the distribution of the medals commemorative of these events."

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[451] Extract from a Report of the Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council, approved by his Excellency on the 1st June 1897, in Canadian General Service Medal, Fenain Raid 1866 & 1870. Red River Expedition, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, LAC, 1.
[452] Ibid, 2.
[453] Ibid.
[454] Copy of a Report of a Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council, on the 16th March 1898, in Canadian General Service Medal, Fenain Raid 1866 & 1870. Red River Expedition, RG24 Vol 5916 Part 1, file No. HQ-51-4-64, LAC, 1-2.
[455] "Why this Lingering Delay? The Veterans of '66 and Red River Expedition Association Do Protest," *Toronto World*, April 12, 1899 in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.

> If the red tape which has kept the matter tied up for year and a half already is not soon removed, there will be few veterans left to receive the medals. A great many of them have passed away since it was decided that the medals should be issued. Since the meeting in Toronto on March 22 last, two veterans residing in this vicinity have died. Official procrastination is especially regrettable in a case of this kind.[456]

The medals were finally awarded in late 1899, with a total of 500 medals with clasps minted for veterans of Wolseley's expedition.[457] Many Red River veterans were also receiving clasps for participating in other campaigns; sixty-nine had also served during the 1866 Fenian Raid, fifty-two had served during the 1870 Fenian Raid, and another fifty-three had served in both the 1866 and 1870 Fenian crises.[458]

The concerted effort on the part of the veterans to procure medals for themselves – and the institutional support provided to them by the elites of English-Canadian society – is testament to the cultural capital associated with militia service in late Victorian Canada. Many veterans certainly considered their medals to be prestigious possessions. In May 1899, a veteran of 1885 wrote in response to an article in the *Globe* claiming that some Northwest medals were being sold in pawn shops. After arguing that the medals were valuable "…solely on account of their being given by her majesty as a recognition of the hardships we endured, and the speedy manner in which we put down the rebellion", the writer argued for punitive action:

> Now, I submit that the military authorities should take immediate steps to test the truth of this statement, and if it is true, that they should at once bring to justice the parties guilty of this grave misdemeanor.[459]

The writer signed his letter "One of the North-West Field Force."[460] He was not alone in his high regard for the Queen's medals; many volunteers valued their medals enough to seek replacements when they lost the originals. Replacement medals had been prepared almost

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[456] "Official Procrastination," *Toronto World*, April 18, 1899, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.
[457] "A question of Ribbons," in *The Globe*, May 19, 1899, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 1.
[458] "Application for Canadian Service Medals," in Canadian General Service Medal, Fenain Raid 1866 & 1870. Red River Expedition, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, LAC.
[459] "To the Editor of the Mail," *The Mail and* Empire, May 29, 1899, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 55.
[460] Ibid.

immediately after 1885, in anticipation of possible need. In 1891, the Canadian government accepted an offer from London to provide a small further supply of medals and clasps, for both new applicants that might come forward and for "cases of unavoidable loss".[461]

Some former soldiers wrote the Department of Defence to request medals they had not received, but felt were owed to them. In 1903, Ambroise Lafrance, formerly of "A" Battery of the Royal Canadian Artillery, wrote the Minister of Militia arguing that although his unit had not been chosen to go west until after the fighting was done, he had still volunteered for service and therefore should be entitled to recognition:

> I have done part of the campaign [sic] and although the government decided to reward by a medal the service of the army, I never got one, wich [sic] I always considered very unjust and I appeal to you for justice entirely trusting your uprightness…. Was not the two hundred miles walk from Swift Current to Battleford and the same distance back again travelled in winter wich [sic] took off ten days, camping in snow or mud, dragging along our artillery where horses could not do it, was it not hard task enough?[462]

Lafrance concluded his message with an appeal to patriotism, saying, "Let me have the medal that would honor me, so much, which I can leave to my children to remember them that their father was a patriot in case of future need."[463] In the same year, a petition was received from No. 1 Garrison Battery at Levis, requesting that its members receive the Northwest service medal. During the conflict, the unit was kept on duty in the garrison at Quebec, awaiting the possibility of being sent west. In the end, they remained in the citadel, but believed their constant state of readiness entitled them to a medal. The petition noted that the Battery was "…la seule qui n'ait pas reçu du gouvernement la médaille, récompense des loyaux services rendus".[464] It is worth noting that despite the outrage in French Quebec regarding the execution of Riel, these largely French-Canadian soldiers still sought acknowledgement from the Canadian government for their patriotism and sense of duty.

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[461] Letter from the Minister of Militia and Defence to unknown recipient, 16 February, 1891, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal & Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, LAC, 1.
[462] Letter from Ambroise Lafrance to the Honourable Minister of Militia, Rec'd March 23, 1903, in Ambroise Lafrance, Corner St. Andre and Hughes Streets, Montreal – Application for a North West Medal, RG9-II-A-1 vol. 361, LAC, 1-2.
[463] Ibid, 2.
[464] A l'honorable Ministre de la Milice et de la Défense du Canada, Sir Frédéric William Borden, Rec'd March 25, 1903, in Ambroise Lafrance, Corner St. Andre and Hughes Streets, Montreal – Application for a North West Medal, RG9 II A1 vol. 361, LAC, 2.

**Ghostly national imaginings: Monuments and memorials**

Medals were not the only accolades soldiers received. Even Middleton, who by the end of the campaign was coming under criticism from many quarters for his cautious approach, became the recipient of numerous accolades – chiefly in the form of scrolls presented by city councils, municipal corporations, and other community organizations. There is a British tradition of presenting successful military leaders with scrolls – Garnet Wolseley had received a good number from communities in Great Britain as he rose through the ranks in the years following his expedition to Red River, including the freedom of the city of London.[465] Canadians enthusiastically seized the chance to participate in this tradition and to laud their own victorious commander - although sometimes praise for the General was treated more as an opportunity to express admiration for Canada's citizen soldiers.

After an initial round of praise for Sir Frederick, a scroll from the city of Fredericton, New Brunswick, shifted focus to the volunteers under his command. Much was made of the local boys, even though they had not reached the front before the fighting ended:

> …if they did not get to the front before the war was over, it was not fault of theirs, but the fault (if the word here is not a misnomer) of those who fought so well – like the 300 at Thermopylae and the 600 Light Brigade at Balaclava – that there was no occasion for their services; the bravery however was the same; it was only the opportunity that was wanting to show our Western fellow colonists that we of the East like themselves, were eager for the fray, and should have given a good account of ourselves had the war continued.[466]

The garrison city of Kingston, Ontario, also presented the commander with a scroll in October 1885 which read, in part: "We are aware of how much the success depended on the self-denial, cheerful alacrity and bravery of the Citizen soldiery…." It was quick, however, to follow up by thanking Middleton "..for the skill with which you directed their operations."[467] The city of

[465] "Freedom of the city of London, 1874," in Garnet Wolseley fonds, Series 4, M-1332-55, box 9, Glenbow Archives.
[466] Ibid, 3.
[467] "To Major General Sir Frederick Middleton, K.C.M.G.," Civic scroll from the city of Kingston, in Frederick Dobson Middleton (1825-1898), MG3 C18, Archives of Manitoba, 1.

Regina's scroll, meanwhile, praised the General for his "…evident regard for the lives of the citizen soldiers under your command."[468]

The city of Ottawa's scroll, like many others, skillfully wove praise for the nation's Volunteers into the accolades being sung for the General:

> …your wisdom, ability and tact, not less than your personal bravery, have convinced all impartial observers that your success in quelling the rebellion – apart from the acknowledged courage of the men under your command – has been owing to the fact that you were pre-eminently "the right man in the right place."[469]

The community of Prince Albert concluded its scroll to Middleton by congratulating "…the Volunteers of Canada upon the way in which they have proved themselves at least as equal as in the past to answer the call" and thanking the General for leading them so ably.[470] Winnipeg ended its scroll in a similar fashion, stating that the city was "…proud of the achievements which under your leadership her sons have added to the renown of British arms."[471] The county of Victoria in the province of Ontario took a different tack, creating a scroll that detailed a motion of their council to thank not only Middleton, but also Adolphe Caron and "…the Volunteers who so gallantly suppressed the Rebellion in the North West Territories during the present year".[472] Even the Hamilton Exhibition, opened by Middleton in September of 1885, found it necessary to present him with a scroll praising his leadership qualities, as well as the abilities of "…our gallant volunteers."[473]

More permanent than scrolls and more visible than medals were the public monuments dedicated to the volunteers. Many of the communities that had sent soldiers chose to commemorate their sacrifice in brick and stone. In Winnipeg, work on a monument began almost immediately. By 21 February 1886, the contract for the erection of a volunteer memorial had

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[468] "To Major General Sir Frederick Middleton, K.C.M.G.," Civic scroll from the city of Regina, in Frederick Dobson Middleton (1825-1898), MG3 C18, Archives of Manitoba, 1.
[469] "To Major General Sir Frederick Middleton, K.C.M.G.," Civic scroll from the city of Ottawa, in Frederick Dobson Middleton (1825-1898), MG3 C18, Archives of Manitoba, 1.
[470] "To Major General Sir Frederick Middleton, C.B., Commanding North West Field Force, On behalf of the Farmers enrolled for the defence of Prince Albert and their families," in Frederick Dobson Middleton (1825-1898), MG3 C18, Archives of Manitoba, 1.
[471] "To Major General Sir Frederick Middleton, K.C.M.G.," Civic scroll from the city of Winnipeg, in Frederick Dobson Middleton (1825-1898), MG3 C18, Archives of Manitoba, 1.
[472] "Municipal Corporation of the County of Victoria in the Province of Ontario," in Frederick Dobson Middleton (1825-1898), MG3 C18, Archives of Manitoba, 1.
[473] "To Major General Sir Frederick Middleton, K.C.M.G.," Civic scroll from the Hamilton Exhibition, in Frederick Dobson Middleton (1825-1898), MG3 C18, Archives of Manitoba, 1.

been signed by City Council and the contractor was ready to begin work. The final product was a massive stone tribute to the fallen members of the 90th Rifles who had fought at Fish Creek and Batoche. It cost over $5,000 and was paid for entirely by private subscriptions.


Figure 13: Cermonies at Unveiling Volunteer Monument, Winnipeg Sept 27th. City of Winnipeg Archives.

The memorial was unveiled directly in front of City Hall on 28 September 1886 – which had been declared a civic holiday. At 10 am, Winnipeg's various military organizations marched from the drill hall to City Hall, where the volunteers' memorial waited to be unveiled. As with accounts of the departure and arrival of the troops, the *Manitoba Free Press* reporter emphasized the size and patriotism of the crowds at the event:

> Arriving at city hall square they found an immense concourse of people already assembled. The square was black with them; every window facing the monument

> had its quota of eager watchers; and even the unfinished city hall and Fould's block were used as vantage points for viewing the ceremony.[474]

Winnipeg's elite was well-represented at the unveiling, with speeches by the Lieutenant-Governor, the Mayor, and chairman of the City's monument committee, J.H. Ashdown. All were anxious to attach their name to commemorating "the brave men" from Winnipeg who had served in the Northwest.[475] It was Ashdown's speech, however, that stated most explicitly the volunteers' memorial *raison d'être*. According to the chairman, the monument would forever structure Winnipeg's collective memory of the conflict and provide an ideal exemplar of service to the state:

> And in the future – be it near or far distant – the forces of Canada are again called on to take up arms to maintain the integrity of their country, they can ask for no higher standard, they can look for no more noble example of unflinching devotion to duty, than is afforded by the heroic lives that ebbed away on the banks of the Saskatchewan, and whose memory we are met this day to perpetuate.[476]

A smaller, more personal monument was also dedicated to the fallen in the St. John's Church graveyard in north Winnipeg, where seven of the nine fatal casualties sustained by the 90th Rifles are buried. The front of the tomb displays the names of all seven, and below the names it reads "In memory of comrades killed in action or died from wounds." The front also lists the 90th's battle honours – Fish Creek and Batoche – and displays larger-than-life replicas of both sides of the Northwest Service Medal. On the sides of the tomb, the names of Alex Watson and J Hutchinson, the two soldiers not buried in the cemetery, are listed.[477] In Russell, Manitoba, a solemn memorial was erected in memory of Edward Brown and Darcy Baker, two members of Boulton's scouts who died on campaign. The simple stone structure features a cross, the stylized initials of the two fallen soldiers, and an inscription that reads "This monument was erected by their comrades in the North West Rebellion."[478]

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[474] "In Memoriam: Unveiling of the Volunteers' Monument Yesterday," *Manitoba Free Press,* September 29, 1886, 8.
[475] Ibid.
[476] "Mr. Ashdown's Speech," Northwest Rebellion Monument, Wpg 1886 File, Box 1, North West Field Force, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[477] Volunteers' tomb, historic graveyard of the Anglican Cathedral of St. John, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
[478] "Russell, Man. In Memory of Edward Brown and Darcy Baker, of Boulton's Scouts, in the Riel Rebellion," Box 1, North West Field Force, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.


Figure 14: Volunteers' tomb, historic graveyard of the Anglican Cathedral of St. John, Winnipeg, MB. Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.

At least one of the dead, Lieutenant Charles Swinford, also received his own tablet at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Winnipeg. Made of white marble set on black marble, it listed Swinford's allegiance to the 90th alongside the circumstances of his death at Fish Creek. Apart from this, the tablet simply listed three qualities: "Brave, Gentle and True."[479] When Lieutenant-Colonel Mackeand of the 90th passed away two years later, his tombstone would also be carved with the symbols of his battalion and engraved with very similar words – "Noble, brave and true." What was more, Mackeand's grave would be located directly beside the volunteers' monument in St. John's cemetery.[480] Practices were very similar in Ontario; in St. James Cathedral in Toronto, a tablet was erected for Lieutenant William Charles Fitch, who had been

[479] "Lieut. Swinford," *Manitoba Free Press,* April 23, 1886, 4.
[480] Tombstone of Lieut. Col. A. MacKeand, historic graveyard of the Anglican Cathedral of St. John, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

killed in action at Batoche. The tablet, erected by his fellow officers, was engraved with the words "kind, gentle, and brave."[481]

Figure 15: Military celebration around Sharpshooter's Monument, ca. 1888. Library and Archives Canada, MIKAN 3394679.

There were many more ambitious monuments located in Ontario as well. In Ottawa a memorial dedicated to two Ottawa sharpshooters was unveiled on 1 November 1888 by the Governor General, Lord Stanley, with additional speeches by Minister of Militia and Defence Adolphe P. Caron and General Middleton. Attendance was estimated at 5,000.[482] The speeches stressed how Canada's volunteers had ensured themselves a permanent home in the pantheon of Canada's warrior heroes. Lord Stanley declared that "The memorial to these men will stand up here to public view, long to be gazed upon I hope, with feelings of respect." Minister Caron echoed the Governor General, saying,

[481] Bertie W. Antrobus, "Reminiscences of Fort Macleod in 1885," in 1896 Military Records: The Globe – Northwest Memorial, MU2049, F895, Military Records collection, Archives of Ontario, 101.
[482] John D. Reid, Ed., *The Ottawa Sharpshooters* (Ottawa: The British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa, 2005), 29.

> Let every Canadian remember that when her sons do their duty, Canada will place them in the list of heroes who have won a right to monuments, and whose memory deserves to be gratefully cherished by those who sincerely love their country." [483]

The monument features two larger-than-life bronze medallion portraits of the two soldiers, fixed on opposite sides of the stone base. Atop the base stands a mournful soldier, lamenting the loss of his fellow volunteers.

The lone soldier was a popular theme in monuments to the volunteers, featured not just in Winnipeg and Ottawa, but also in St. Catharines, Ontario, where a monument was erected in the memory of Alex Watson of the Winnipeg 90th Rifles. Watson had grown up in St. Catharines before moving west, joining the Northwest Field Force and then dying of wounds sustained at the battle of Batoche. After his death, Watson had the privilege of receiving two funerals – one in Winnipeg alongside three of his comrades, and then in his hometown of St. Catharines. In less than a year, a committee was able to solicit enough funds from local businesses and the public to construct a monument to Watson, which took the form not of Watson himself, but of an anonymous Canadian volunteer. Benedict Anderson has written that anonymous memorials – such as the tombs of Unknown Soldiers - are "…saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings."[484] In St. Catharines, even though the monument was dedicated to a particular individual, the deliberate choice to portray an anonymous soldier is telling. Those responsible for the monument were not simply commemorating an individual's death. Rather, through Watson's death, they wished to honour all Canadian soldiers and declare their kinship with those who served. Much like the unveiling of the statue in Winnipeg, the unveiling of the Watson monument was a lively affair, where one journalist reported that "…every spot that could hold a sight-seer" was occupied.[485]

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[483] Robert Sibley, "Long to be gazed upon: Portraits in bronze honour duty, loyalty and love of country," *Ottawa Citizen*, February 2, 2010, http://www.ottawacitizen.com/pdf/storiesinstone/storiesinstone4.pdf (accessed April 3, 2017), 1-2.

[484] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 9.

[485] Russel Johnson & Michael Ripmeester, "A Monument's Work is Never Done: The Watson Monument, Memory and Forgetting in a Small Canadian City" *International Journal of Heritage* Studies, Vol 13, No. 2 March 2007, 122-123. See also Monique Beech, "Decaying Statue Stirs Debate," *St. Catharines Standard*, Monday, November 16, 2009 (http://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/2009/11/16/decaying-statue-stirs-debate), accessed April 4, 2016.


Figure 16: Alex Watson Monument in St. Catherines, Ontario. Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.

The hero of Batoche also received a statue, and its unveiling was just as grand a spectacle as his funeral. The memorial was revealed on 4 September 1889 in Williams' hometown of Port Hope. The local paper declared attendance at the event to be in the thousands, with numerous judges, mayors, and MPs in attendance as well as the townspeople themselves. Speeches were made in a packed town square by none other Prime Minister John A. Macdonald and the Minister of Militia Adolphe Caron, while the statue itself was unveiled by Oliver Mowat, the Premier of Ontario. The program for the event – as well as the inscription on the memorial itself – stated that the Williams monument had been erected by "…his admiring countrymen throughout Canada assisted by his companions in arms and the Government of the Dominion."[486] In fact, funds had been voted in Parliament for the construction of the late MP's statues. Signs

[486] "Williams Memorial, Order of Proceedings," 1896 Military records – The Globe – Northwest Memorial, MU2049, F895, Archives of Ontario.

erected for the event declared Williams "The Hero of Batoche" and proclaimed that "His life was given for his country."[487]


Figure 17: Unveiling of Arthur Williams statue in Port Hope. Porthopehistory.com.

Not all memorials took the form of grand stone monuments or heroic statues. In Peterborough, Ontario, the memorial committee formed to construct a memorial to native son Edward Templeton Brown, who had fallen in the Northwest campaign, chose to build a drinking fountain. This different approach did not prevent the city from organizing a proper unveiling ceremony, which actually saw General Middleton do the honours. Brown had fallen in the final charge at Batoche, and in its address at the unveiling, the memorial committee upheld him as a model Canadian, declaring "Peterborough does well to honour such a Soldier! And in honouring him we honour the whole force engaged in the suppression of the rebellion."[488] The drinking fountain, the committee explained, "…fitly symbolizes the life blood that has been shed and the useful services that have been rendered by her sons for our beloved country." At the ceremony, the committee gave ownership of the fountain to the town authorities "…as a sacred trust, to

[487] http://www.porthopehistory.com/colwilliamsstatue/ (accessed 27 April 2017).
[488] To Major General Sir Frederick Middleton," Speech by the chair of the Memorial Committee of Peterborough, in Frederick Dobson Middleton (1825-1898), MG3 C18, Archives of Manitoba, 3.

commemorate the bravery of our citizen soldiers, to keep alive the memory of the gallant Captain Brown."[489]

The City of Toronto also built a monument to the city's volunteers, although it took much longer to construct and was only unveiled on 27 June 1896 – more than eleven years after the conflict. The reason for the delay had been initial difficulties in raising subscriptions to pay for the construction, although the Dominion and Ontario governments had both immediately granted the project $1000 and the City of Toronto provided $500. Women were at the forefront of aiding and honouring the soldiers, just as they had been during the conflict itself; a ladies' committee had driven the project, and at the unveiling several speakers particularly commended the secretary of the committee, Mrs. Josephine Fletcher, for her dedication to seeing the monument erected. One speaker noted that "…as long as Canada had such women taking an interest in her affairs they might be sure the country would fulfil the high destiny which awaited it."[490] Praise for Mrs. Fletcher emphasized that the ideal woman's role was to support and promote Canadian manhood, particularly when it manifested itself in the form of the citizen soldier.

Despite praise for the women of the committee, the true focus of the unveiling ceremony was most definitely Canadian manhood – and the state fully supported that emphasis. Just like the memorial unveilings that took place in Winnipeg in 1886, Ottawa in 1888, or Port Hope in 1889, the event was a gala affair. The day began with a military parade to Queen's Park, where the memorial sat waiting with a crowd that the *Globe* estimates to have been five to six thousand people. Speeches were made by Ontario's Lieutenant Governor, Toronto's Mayor and by both local Members of Parliament and local Members of Provincial Parliament. Much in the speeches resembled Ashdown's Winnipeg speech of ten years earlier, mirroring his valorization the citizen soldier and stressing that the volunteers were exemplars to all true Canadians – now and forevermore. Member of Parliament Edward Frederick Clarke declared the volunteers "…worthy descendants of those earlier heroes of 1812," thus explicitly connecting these new veterans to Canada's original mythical militia. Toronto's Mayor Fleming, meanwhile, declared that the monument would ensure that Torontonians would always have a model of exemplary Canadian manhood to emulate:

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[489] Ibid, 4.
[490] "The Noble Dead: A New Monument for the Queen's Park Northwest Field," *The Toronto Globe* June 29, 1896, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 6.

> It was meet and right that the country should keep in remembrance those who had fallen. This monument would keep their memories green, and would also have a good effect upon the rising generation. In the future the people of Canada would look back with gratitude to those men who went to the North West to defend and preserve the integrity of the Dominion.[491]

THE MONUMENT UNVEILED—TAKEN JUST AS THE COVERING HAD FALLEN.

Figure 18: Toronto 1885 volunteers' monument at Queen's Park. Archives of Ontario, MU5442.

Unlike the monuments in Winnipeg, Ottawa, St. Catharines, and Port Hope, Toronto's monument did not feature a lone soldier. Instead, Toronto's committee opted for a more symbolic approach, with a sculpture of a woman atop the stone monument. The local press described the significance of the sculpture:

> The figure, which surmounts a handsome pedestal of Canadian granite, is cast in bronze, and represents a beautiful woman, clad in a long robe, the shoulders and arms bare. The figure is symbolical of Canada. The right hand, uplifted, holds an olive branch, emblematic of peace. The left hand commands silence, and a heavy sword, incased in a scabbard, is suspended from a large sword belt looped across the figure. At the feet of the figure is a cluster of maple leaves, drooping over the pedestal.[492]

[491] Ibid.
[492] "The Monument" unknown news article, in MU5442, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, Ontario Historical Society Scrapbooks, Archives of Ontario.

The pedestal below the statue featured even more artwork, such as the war trophies of pistols, tomahawks, arrows, and war clubs – saying much more about white settler perceptions of Indigenous warfare than it did about any weapons used in the conflict itself. In addition to the artwork, the names of all those who had been killed in action were displayed on the pedestal, as well as the coat of arms of the Dominion. If all this symbolism was not clear enough, the Latin phrase "Dulce et Decorum est pro patria mori" – it is noble and proper to die for one's country – was inscribed on one side of the monument.[493]

All these efforts at public commemoration – the medals, the monuments, and the ceremonies – were helping Canadians create a narrative with which to interpret the significance of 1885. This was myth-construction at its finest. The bravery and heroism of the volunteers was forged into a story that looked remarkably similar, regardless of whether one visited a monument unveiling in Winnipeg, a medal presentation in Toronto, or a welcome to General Middleton in Fredericton.[494] In English Canada, the veterans of 1885 served the aims of Canada's official political culture better than perhaps any single other group to that point in the young Dominion's existence. Not only did the volunteers contribute to building a proud and martial Canadian identity – they also helped secure the Dominion an improved position in the British Imperial family, by proving the young nation could do its part in shouldering the burden of Empire. The 1885 conflict also bolstered the already-popular militia myth propagated by Canada Firsters such as Charles Mair and G.M. Grant. Often implicitly but sometimes explicitly, speakers at public commemoration ceremonies compared the volunteers to the "heroes" of 1812. Nearly all speakers envisioned the soldiers of 1885 as exemplars of patriotic masculinity that would resonate with future generations of Canadians, inspiring citizens to sacrifice for their country whenever they were called upon. Referring to Loyalist/1812 heroes such as Joseph Brant and Laura Secord, historian Norman Knowles notes that they received monuments "…less for their own intrinsic accomplishments than for their ability to carry the political or social aspirations of their promoters." The same statement could be applied to the veterans of 1885. In the celebration of Canada's citizen soldiers, any accomplishments were secondary to their ability to inspire patriotism and a celebration of white Canadian manhood.[495]

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[493] Ibid.
[494] Gildea, *The Past in French History*, 10.
[495] Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*, 12.

Memory is neither monolithic within a nation or community, nor is memory always dictated by officialdom. In the case of 1885, however, there was a close alignment of official memory as manifest in the medals and monuments created and/or sanctioned by the state, and the vernacular memory of the Canadian militia volunteers who had directly experienced the conflict. The fluid relationships between veteran and state memory makes it difficult, if not impossible, to determine where official memory begins and vernacular memory ends. The veterans were remarkably comfortable with the past that authorities wanted to commemorate. There were differences, of course – the history that veterans strove to remember was usually focused less on glamour and patriotism and more on the quotidian experiences of the campaign trail and on comradeship. Some veterans even saw their foes in a sympathetic light, but when push came to shove, the veterans were willing to defend the official memory of 1885 – the story told by the statues and the medals.

**"A name of honor and renown through all the world"**

Veterans were very active in public commemorations that occurred in the wake of the 1885 conflict – and not just as observers and participants at state-sponsored events. They themselves were actively engaged in constructing their own narrative. This process began immediately after their return from the front. On 29 and 30 July, the 90th Battalion gave public performances of its new musical, *The 90th on Active Service*, in its hometown of Winnipeg. The *Manitoba Free Press* wrote a positive review, and reported that the event on the 29th was attended by the Lieutenant-Governor, as well as "…several newspaper representatives and an almost unlimited quantity of other respectable people." The reviewer lauded the performance's ability to convey the experiences of Canada's soldiers to a civilian audience. It is worth noting that the reviewer already felt comfortable calling the regiment by its new nickname without any explanation, even though Rifles had only been given it three months before. It spoke to the author's assumption that all his readers would have followed the conflict closely and already be familiar with the story of the "little black devils."

> The cast was a long one, and the stage was crowded most of the time with the "little black devils," but there was no stint of amusement, and many of the scenes incident to a campaign were presented with a realistic vividness that enabled the audience to form a tolerably correct idea of the vicissitudes which the soldiers

> underwent, and the inperturbable [sic] sang froid with which they grappled with them.[496]

*The 90th on Active Service* prominently featured the hardships faced by soldiers, such as nasty weather, long marches, and bad food. It also spoke about the dangers of battle and the sense of adventure and camaraderie. As mentioned previously, it also presented racist stock characters for comedic effect. It is a curious record of the campaign, but not completely unique. In fact, there is another musical about 1885 that was both written and performed by Canada's citizen-soldiers.

This second burlesque was created by the men of the Halifax Provisional Battalion, performed in the city on 12 and 13 April 1886, under the patronage of the Lieutenant Governor. It was called *Halifax to the Saskatchewan: "Our Boys" in the Riel Rebellion*, and featured songs and scenes from the Battalion's experience. Unity and patriotism were at the forefront – the introduction declared:

> The rebellion bears on its face nothing but sorrow and loss, yet out of it has grown a warmer attachment for the flag and the land. Provincial and party ties were forgotten; we had become one people. In our journey of seven thousand miles kindness was everywhere met, and the feelings thus created – sanctified by the blood of those who fell – will help in making "This Canada of Ours" a Nation.[497]

The show itself did not feature any racialized stereotypes and instead focused squarely on the hardships faced in the Northwest, such as cold and deprivation. Characters spoke of the sub-zero flatcar rides across Northern Ontario, all the while presenting the troops as bearing it with a sense of adventure and bonhomie. The chorus of one song called "The H.P.B." described the Battalion's efforts as follows: "Been marching all the night long, / Been hungry all the way, / Been working all the day long, / With fifty cents for pay."[498] The play was also careful to indicate that the Halifax volunteers were disappointed not to experience combat, with one character remarking: "The major is as mad as anybody at being kept here while the boys at Batoche and Battleford are having all the fun."[499] One stanza from another song, "The Saskatchewan Guard's Lament," proclaimed "Soon perhaps, we home will go, / but nary a scalp

[496] "On Active Service: The 90th Abroad and at Home," *Manitoba Free Press*, July 30, 1885, 3.
[497] Sergt. L Dixon, *Halifax to the Saskatchewan: "Our Boys" in the Riel Rebellion* (Halifax: Holloway Bros, 1886), 3.
[498] Ibid. 20.
[499] Ibid, 24.

have we to show / Of "Injun" we killed in the war."[500] Remarkably, this was the only reference to Indigenous people included in the play. The Winnipeg and Halifax musicals, performed by the volunteers themselves, allowed the soldiers to share their narrative with the wider public; on some small level, civilians could experience what the men on campaign experienced.

Of course, the public had already been reading a version of this narrative in newspapers and publications such as the *IWN* for quite some time. The *IWN* itself also made a final attempt to memorialize the conflict by publishing a souvenir edition in two parts. The cover of the first part was not subtle in its symbolism; it depicted a woman in classical robes and armour, sporting a shield emblazoned with a maple leaf and a sword impaled in the head of a poisonous snake lying at her feet.[501] The message was clear – gallant Canada had crushed the poisonous serpent of rebellion. The edition contained a collection of pictures from issues of the *IWN* published throughout the campaign, but also held a new two-page illustration that was entirely allegorical. Entitled "Canada's Sacrifice," it used classical imagery to relay the heroism of the country's citizen soldiers. In the centre of the illustration, a young man lay on a tomb marked "Patria"; around him were columns marked with the names of those who had died in the conflict. To the left of the tomb a winged woman – likely Nike, the winged goddess of victory – blows her horn while another goddess or muse rings a bell for the dead. In front of the tomb, a woman kneels and pulls at her hair in mourning and anguish while a Roman standard lies beside her.[502] Again, the message was clear – these soldiers had died for their country; the Gods paid tribute to their valour and their fellow citizens mourned their loss.

[500] Ibid, 33.
[501] *Canadian Pictorial & Illustrated War News: Souvenir Number, Part 1*, 4 July 1885, Larry Becker fonds, Series 340; Larry Becker militaria, Subseries 3; Larry Becker 1880s / North-West Rebellion militaria, File 2, City of Toronto Archives.
[502] Arnold Haultain, *A history of Riel's second rebellion, and how it was quelled. Canadian pictorial and illustrated war news* (Toronto: Grip Print and Pub. Co., 1885), np.

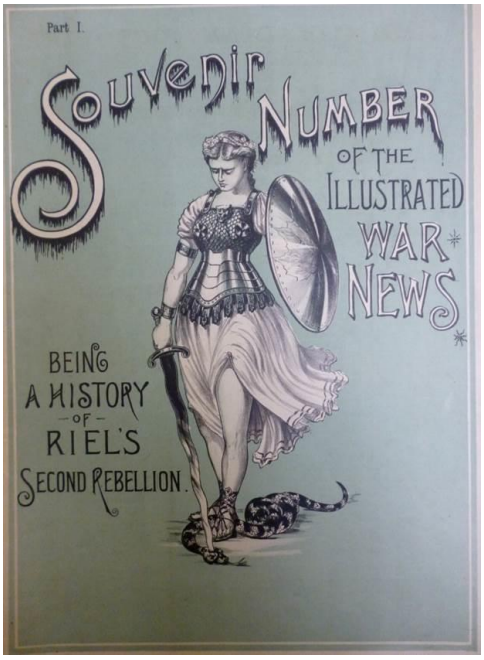


Figure 19: Cover for Part 1 of the *IWN*'s Souvenir Number. City of Toronto Archives, Larry Becker fonds.

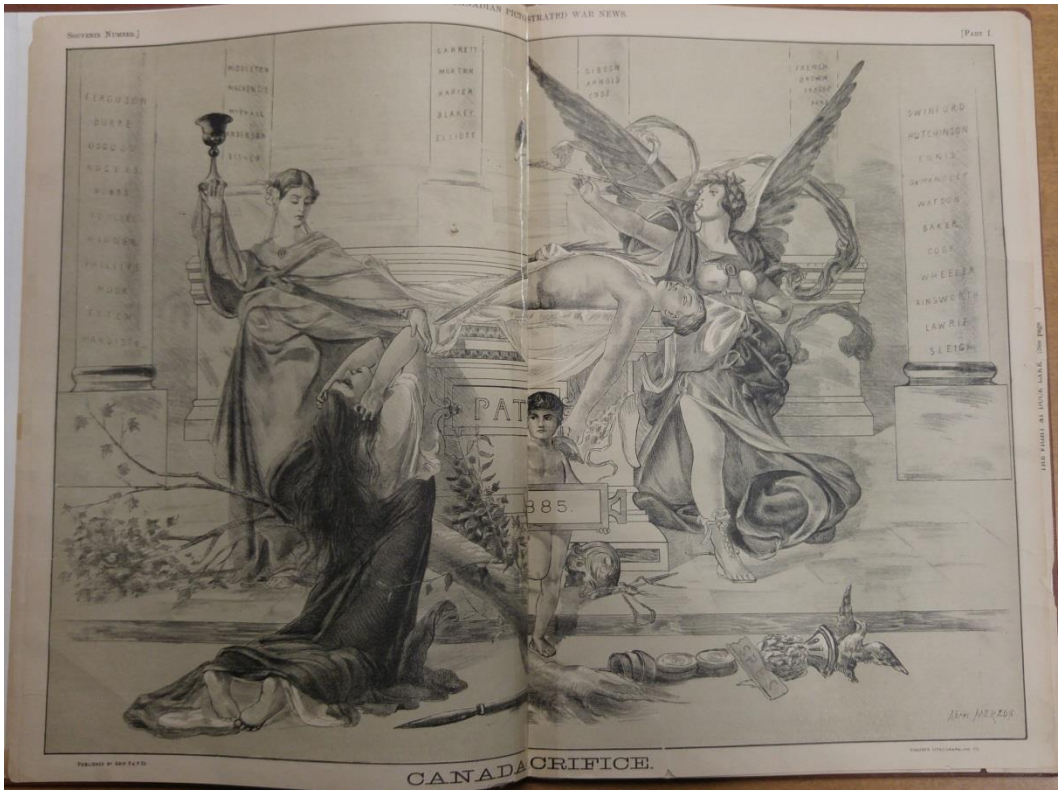


Figure 20: "Canada's Sacrifice" illustration from the *IWN*. Winnipeg Public Library.

Not all media outlets went quite as far as the *IWN*, and some even leveled mild criticisms at the volunteers. Even as the troops were returning to Winnipeg on 15 July, the *Manitoba Free Press* published an editorial lamenting "…the wide-spread and pitiful destitution of the half-breeds of the Saskatchewan, occasioned by the unwarrantable looting that was done."[503] The Liberal-controlled paper was quick to put the blame for such pillaging on the Conservative government rather than the soldiers:

> We are not blaming the rank and file of the volunteers, because, in the first place, they were supposed to be under military discipline, and because, in the second, we believe that beyond picking up a few trifles as relics of the campaign they did little or nothing towards reducing the half-breed families to the state of complete destitution in which they are at present. But we do blame and despise those responsible for what has been done, and the public will agree with us.[504]

This type of criticism of soldiers' comportment was the exception rather than the rule. In the days following the return of the volunteers, few were focusing on the misdeeds of Canada's heroes.

The veterans themselves were certainly not concerned with casting a critical eye on their behavior on campaign. Instead, whenever they could, they gathered together to reminisce and share their memories of the conflict. Members of the Queen's Own Rifles began holding reunion dinners for veterans of the campaign before the year was out; No. 3 Company held its first soirée in October 1885 while No. 1 Company organized its dinner for December 1885.[505] The menu cards from both events were clearly meant as keepsakes for the soldiers. They were lavishly illustrated – by the same artist – with different scenes from the campaign. Most of the art was of a humorous bent, with officers sleeping on the job, soldiers chasing a cow, and rabbits mourning their comrades being turned into pie. Only one sketch hinted at the darker side of war – a soldier lying in the dirt with the caption "When will this cruel war be – oh!" Much of the art and the writing depicted the marching, fighting, and camaraderie so many recalled in their diaries and journals. There was even a sketch of a dog the Rifles had adopted and named "Poundmaker." It all spoke to a story of stalwart volunteers who braved hardship and deprivation with pluck and

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[503] "A Melancholy Triumph," *Manitoba Free Press*, July 15, 1885, 2.
[504] Ibid.
[505] "Re-union of No. 3 Company, Queen's Own Rifles, Canada, North-West Field Force, Thursday, October 22, 1885 at the Walker House: Menu", Queen's Own Rifles Museum. Also: "Re-union of No. 1 Company, Queen's Own Rifles, Canada, North-West Field Force, Friday, December 11, 1885 at the Walker House: Menu", Elgin Morell fonds, MG29 E90 1, Elgin Morell fonds, LAC.

humor. Written on the borders of No. 1 Company's menu card was the anonymous quotation: "Poor hungry soldiers, Tra la la la la, la la la." At the same time, there was strong support for the larger public narrative about the conflict. Written around the borders of No. 3 Company's card were noble lines from Shakespeare and Byron, as well as a quote from the late Sir George Étienne Cartier: "The Bulwark of Canada's defence must be her citizen soldiers."[506]

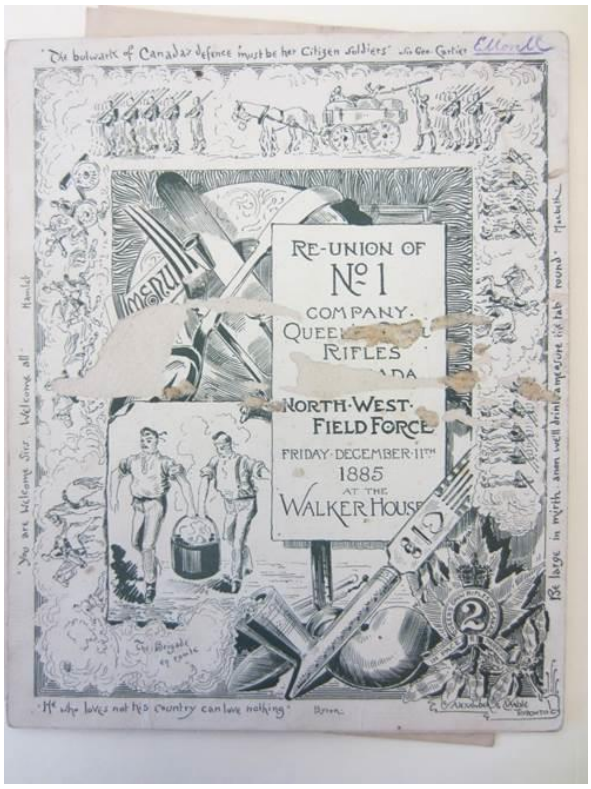


Figure 21: A menu card from the reunion of the No. 1 company of the Queen's Own Rifles. Library and Archives Canada, MG29 E90.

The Queen's Own were not alone in holding reunion dinners. In Winnipeg, the first annual reunion dinner of the 90th Battalion's "E" Company took place on the evening of 21 April 1886 and received a full write-up in the *Manitoba Free Press*. The *Free Press* reported that the entire Company, as well as the Battalion's orchestra and Winnipeg's Mayor, were in attendance. The speeches at the event tended to support the narrative of a united Canada. Lieutenant McPhillips, while toasting "Our Comrades in Arms," referred to this unity, and also spoke of how in the end, responding to the call was more important than determining the causes of rebellion:

[506] Ibid.

> He spoke of how Manitoba sent three regiments to the front, and referred to the fact that volunteers came from the far off Nova Scotia, whose shores were washed by the waters of the Atlantic. He defended the French volunteers in the field, and spoke in flattering terms of Sir Fred Middleton. They were not to say as to the cause of the rebellion, but could say that all had done their duty, and especially those from the infant Province of Manitoba.[507]

Only a few days later, on 26 April, the city of Winnipeg hosted a grand military demonstration in commemoration of the Battle of Fish Creek. In this instance the veterans and the state were working together as almost equal partners to craft public memory. The Church also participated in the process, with a sermon delivered by Canon O'Mears at St. John's Church. O'Mears' words mirrored the speeches of the soldiers and the politicians, but with Christ's official blessing:

> A short year ago, and our Province and nation were passing through a crisis which will have graven itself very deeply on the memories of all; a time when our people's hearts were heavy with anxiety for our brave citizen soldiers, who at the call of duty had sprung so cheerfully to arms, and through privation and through danger had gone forth to do and dare in their country's cause.[508]

O'Mears went on to say that the volunteers were now "…a name of honor and renown through all the world", giving divine approval to their service.

Not all memory around the volunteers was constructed through large public events, nor with the explicit endorsement of the state and religious authorities. Many volunteers were eager to share their personal stories and connect them to a wider narrative. Before 1885 even came to a close, veterans of the campaign had begun to publish memoirs to tell their side of the story. One of the first came from Charles Pelham Mulvaney, formerly of the Queen's Own Rifles of Toronto, who had seen action with Colonel Otter's column. In his preface, Mulvaney showed his willingness to line up his vernacular memory with officialdom, noting that "…it was not for us as Canadians to ask whether the rebels had any right on their side or not.[509] Like O'Mears, Mulvaney put loyalty to the nation above all else.

As noted in the previous chapter, Major Charles Arkoll Boulton, the commander of Boulton's scouts, also published a volume shortly after the rebellion, which he dedicated to the

[507] "Military Men: First Annual Reunion of "E" Company," *Manitoba Free Press*, April 22, 1886, 4.
[508] "In Memoriam: A Grand Military Demonstration Yesterday," *Manitoba Free Press*, April 26, 1886, 4.
[509] Charles Pelham Mulvaney, *The History of the North-West Rebellion of 1885*, vi.

officers and men of his corps. Interestingly, Boulton also identified his target audience as his fellow soldiers.[510] Boulton praises Middleton's handling of the campaign, but retains his greatest accolades for Canada's volunteers, noting that "In the later [1885] rebellion, the heroism and endurance of her loyal sons enabled the country to overcome sedition and quell the rising."[511] The book actually covered Boulton's role in both 1868-1870 and in 1885. The *Manitoba Free Press* lauded Boulton's volume as "exceedingly interesting," although the Liberal paper disapproved of his praise for Middleton.[512]

In Halifax, Robert A. Sherlock published *Experiences of the Halifax Battalion in the North-West*. The volume did not make any reference to the controversy caused in the city by the calling out of troops. Like many of the other volumes published, it emphasized the patriotism and dedication of the volunteers. "Our country required our service," Sherlock remarks, "and, like true Nova Scotians by birth and adoption as we were, we obeyed its call regardless of consequences." The author was also careful to emphasize local support for the expedition, referring to the crowds that came out to send him off not just in Halifax, but in places such as Truro and Springhill Junction, where miners had been waiting for hours to cheer the soldiers on.[513]

Other memoirs proved to be more cynical about the whole affair. Lewis Redman Ord published *Reminiscences of a Bungle, by One of the Bunglers*, in 1886. It focused on the day-to-day life of Ord and his fellow enlisted men on the Northwest Campaign.[514] Ord was very critical of General Middleton, but this view was not uncommon immediately following 1885. What was less common was Ord's derision of the heroic narrative surrounding the volunteers at the time. Writing in his preface, Ord derided the jingoistic celebrations of the campaign:

> The Northwest Rebellion and all connected therewith have been so puffed by pen and pencil, and the generalship and management so eulogized, that I feel no little diffidence in having a shot at so sacred an event, or attempting to ridicule the actors therein. But I have waited for a truthful and unvarnished account of the

[510] Charles Boulton, *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellions,* 9.
[511] Ibid.
[512] "Charles Boulton" *Manitoba Free Press, May 13, 1886, 2.*
[513] Robert A. Sherlock, *Experiences of the Halifax Battalion in the North-West* (Halifax: JAS. Doley, 1885), 3-4.
[514] Lewis Redman Ord, "Reminiscences of a Bungle, by one of the Bunglers," R.C. Macleod, ed., *Reminiscences of a Bungle by One of the Bunglers and Two Other Rebellion Diaries*.

> campaign, and as no abler hand seems willing to write it, I will give my idea of what I have called our "Bungle," only regretting my inability to do it justice.[515]

Ord mocked the pretensions of what he calls the "…gold-laced and bedizened gentry of the militia", and like some of the pundits during the campaign itself, he pointed out that the volunteers were not properly trained for active service. Ultimately his true complaint lay with the leadership, not the rank-and-file. Speaking of the battle at Fish Creek, Ord praised the volunteers to the detriment of their commanders:

> That the men, raw soldiers though they were, behaved creditably all are agreed, and one cannot but admire their pluck and firmness when one reflects that, in addition to being almost surprised and suddenly placed in a trying position, the incompetence of their commander prevented them from doing more effective service.[516]

Ultimately, Ord's "truthful and unvarnished" retelling of events did not remove much lustre from the achievements of Canada's citizen soldiers. If anything, it added to the heroic nature of the volunteers. Desmond Morton notes that "Victory far sooner than realists had expected was a dangerous reinforcement to the militia myth; volunteers returned in triumph, grumbling only that their British General has been too slow and cautious."[517] Although Ord retained reservations about aspects of the campaign, his writing did not truly challenge the militia myth.

Samuel Steele, who published his memoirs in 1915, was also critical of Middleton, who served as a foil for the gallant men of the Alberta force with whom Steele had fought. Steele ruefully noted that Middleton had been received a knighthood and $20,000, while Canadian commanders such as General Strange, the commander of the Alberta Field Force, had received nothing:

> He [General Strange] had saved Alberta, had rescued the captives who had been in Big Bear's hands, not one shot had been fired against the chief or his murderous tribe and their allies, the Wood Crees, except by Strange's men, and he should certainly have been granted the K.C.M.G.[518]

The Reverend R.G. MacBeth published his own memoir in 1898, and much of it focused on his experience as a soldier in the 1885 conflict. He was far less critical of the commanders

[515] Ibid, 3.
[516] Ibid, 22.
[517] Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, 106
[518] Steele, *Forty Years in Canada*, 231.

and far more patriotic in his tone, presenting the conflict as a time of heroic deeds by soldiers and terrible acts by the enemy. MacBeth's final assessment of 1885, though published at the turn of the century, was not very different from those speeches given in the aftermath of the conflict at the various ceremonies and celebrations. "The scars left by the rebellion are slowly disappearing," MacBeth declares, "and little else remains but the memory of the manner in which a young nation showed itself ready and able to cope with serious difficulties within her borders."[519]

Memoirs were not the only books published by veterans. James Peters, who had served at Fish Creek and Batoche, tried to share his story through the relatively new medium of photography. By January 1886 Peters was advertising "a certain number of albums each containing over 50 of his instantaneous photographs of the Northwest rebellion with a description of each picture" through the *Toronto Mail*.[520] Peters' photos were the first ever taken while under fire and his picture of Riel as prisoner has since become an iconic image of 1885.

Many soldiers were not writers, or if they were, they had no interest in publishing what they wrote. These men kept their memories alive through other methods. In the case of Elgin Morrell of the Queen's Own Rifles, it was scrapbooking.[521] Some veterans even created their own mementos, such as a Northwest Field Force watch fob that is now part of the collection of the City of Toronto Museum Section. The collection also included a veteran's medal created not by Dominion government, but by the Protestant (and anti-French and Anti-Catholic) Loyal Orange Lodge.[522]

[519] MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West*, 207.
[520] Michael Barnholden, *Circumstances Alter Photographs: Captain James Peters Reports from the War of 1885* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2009), 19.
[521] Various items, the scrapbook of Edwin Morell, Edwin Morell fonds, MG29 E-90-1, LAC.
[522] Watch fob and medal, City of Toronto Museum section.


Figure 22: Northwest Field Force key chain. City of Toronto Museum Section.

**Indigenous peoples, collective memory and 1885**

First Nations and Métis who had fought against the NWMP and the Canadian militia did not receive any commemorative acknowledgement from officials in English Canada, although Chiefs who were deemed to have remained loyal received special medals.[523] Some Indigenous people who chose to side with the dominion forces did receive acknowledgement from white settlers for their services, and were sometimes held up as "good Indians." In 1906, when Waladotta, a well-known First Nations man from Teton tribe, passed away, his obituary in the Prince Albert newspaper put his service to queen and country in the headline. It was also noted that Waladotta had also joined the Anglican Church, further establishing him as a "good Indian":

> He took a leading part in the Custer massacre, but after this affair came to Prince Albert, eschewed the tomahawk and rifle, and settled down to peace and domesticity, only returning to warfare in the Rebellion of '85, when he took the

[523] Waiser and Stonechild, *Loyal till Death*, 218.

> side of the white man and rendered very valuable and heroic service to the Government troops in this vicinity. His children were brought up in the Christian faith and sent regularly to the Public School, and for many years he had been a model citizen, never being known to indulge in drink or dissipation of any kind.[524]

Waladotta was one of the exceptions that proved the rule, however. After the campaign, most English Canadians still depicted a full-scale "Indian war" as a perilous spectre looming over Riel's resistance. In Fredericton, the scroll given to Middleton devoted a significant amount of space to cataloguing the dangers of an "Indian war." Considering that the Maritime Provinces were far away from any such threat, it is a powerful illustration of how widespread English-Canadian stereotypes surrounding Indigenous warriors and warfare actually were:

> An Indian war is at any time to be dreaded more than one waged by civilized man, because it is to meet and do battle with untutored savages, cruel, remorseless, treacherous – who fight in ambush, the forest, the ravine, and the morass being their skulking grounds wherein wherein [sic] their greatest strength lies, and hence the unequal advantage over the courage and discipline of the true soldier.[525]

Alongside the urge to demonize First Nations warriors, there remained the desire to infantilize them. Just as the Métis had been fooled by Riel, the First Nations had been tricked by the Métis into the mistake of open rebellion. R.G. MacBeth summed up this position succinctly in his memoir:

> As one of an armed force I have witnessed the surrender of princely Crees and Chippeweyans beyond the banks of the North Saskatchewan – many of them men of magnificent mould and royal bearing – who had been incited to rebellion by people who should have known better.[526]

In the aftermath of Riel's execution, there was also much public antipathy – and some sympathy – towards the Métis. Louis Riel's funeral in St. Boniface very nearly became a violent affair. Posters were circulated in Winnipeg with the dramatic headline "War of Races." The broadside asked "Will an already Outraged Public Stand Quietly by while a Great Demonstration is being made over the Burial of that RED-HANDED REBEL and TRAITOR Louis Riel?" The poster called upon "the truly loyal" to attend the funeral "…and if anything is said insulting to

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[524] "Waladotta Was Buried Yesterday at Prince Albert Saskatchewan: Was in 1885 Rebellion," unknown paper, 1906, Military Records – MU2049, F895, Archives of Ontario, 104.
[525] "To Major General Sir Frederick Middleton, K.C.M.G.," Civic scroll from the city of Fredericton, in Frederick Dobson Middleton (1825-1898), MG3 C18, Archives of Manitoba, 2.
[526] R.G. MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West*, 20.

British Canadians, let them pull the Cathedral down upon the heads of the Tribe that exalt the REBEL, and so blot them from the face of the Earth." The author finished with an emphatic "GOD SAVE THE QUEEN."[527]

This is not to say there was no sympathy for the Métis and their cause among white settlers in North America. After Riel's execution, his former secretary William Jackson, himself a white settler who had joined the Métis, launched a lecture tour through the Midwestern States, arguing for the rightness of Riel's cause. He received positive reviews in many communities, but his tour was never popular enough to make him any money, and eventually he had to give up.[528] Even some veterans expressed respect for their adversary. In his own memoirs, R.G. MacBeth, who had served with Sam Steele in the Alberta Field Force, recalled "I was present at the funeral service in the old cathedral, and was deeply impressed by the evident sorrow of the people whose cause he had, with many mistakes, espoused."[529]

The Red River Métis certainly did consider Riel a hero, but they were careful to differentiate between the Riel who had led Red River into Confederation in 1870 and the Riel who had rebelled against Church and state in 1885. In November of 1891, the Union nationale métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba unveiled a monumental tombstone for Riel. The monument celebrated Riel's role as President of the Provisional Government of 1870 at Red River, but made no mention of the 1885 provisional government at Batoche. The Church did not look upon the events of 1885 favourably: Riel had gone against the Church's teachings and turned against the Priests. In a Union speech in 1906, Father Langevin declared that the government of 1869-1870 had been a "legitimate defence", but that the actions of 1885 were "regrettable." He noted that Riel had rebelled against a legitimate government at the same time as he had separated from the Catholic Church, which Langevin called "sa mère."[530] At the same time, only two years earlier, the Union and a crowd of several hundred had enthusiastically welcomed Gabriel Dumont when he visited Saint Boniface.[531]

[527] "War of Races" the scrapbook of Elgin Morell, Elgin Morell fonds, MG29, E-90, LAC.
[528] Donald B. Smith, *Honoré Jaxon: Prairie Visionary* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2007), 66-67.
[529] R.G. MacBeth, *The Making of the Canadian West*, 188.
[530] Bernard Bocquel, *Les Fidèles à Riel*, 111.
[531] Ibid, 67.

In Saskatchewan's Métis community, where memories of Riel centred squarely on the events of 1885, he was an even more ambiguous figure, often overshadowed by his general Gabriel Dumont. Interviewed in 1973, elder Isadore Ledoux said Riel "…was nothing but a fanatic! He was half crazy!"[532] Others in the community disagreed with Isadore. Emma Moulin, born in 1890, had been told by her mother that Riel was an honourable man and instead pointed to Gabriel Dumont as the cause of the troubles that beset the South Branch Métis in 1885.[533] These views might be indicative of divisions in the community, created in part by arguments over who was to blame for the disasters that befell Batoche in 1885. Given the testimony from other oral histories, however, it appears that Moulin's view of Dumont was decidedly in the minority. Adelaide Ranger, born in 1892, recalled that Dumont seemed quite respected by the community. She noted that Dumont had a front pew at mass every week and when asked directly if people liked Dumont, she gave the following answer:

> Oh yes. Yeah, they seemed to be proud of him as a Metis. And he must have been a nice guy, because he used to come to mass and everybody talked to him …. They made a great, great big tombstone for him.[534]

When asked about Riel, Ranger said "No, they didn't talk about Riel the way they did abut Gabriel. I don't know why." Fred Paulhus, a non-Indigenous man who married a Métis woman and lived near Batoche, recalled old timers who had lived through the rebellion chatting and reminiscing. Like Ranger, Paulhus claimed people liked Dumont, but also stated people didn't blame Riel for what happened either.[535] Antoine Ferguson, who had been born in 1884 and had spoken to Dumont, declared, "Everybody liked him… I mean, they used to talk that he had been a great guy."[536] Of Riel, he stated, "I never heard anybody talked against him."[537]

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[532] Isadore Ledoux interview, Gabriel Dumont Institute, http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/01119.Ledoux%20,%20Isadore%20(C.Pearlstone).pdf (accessed 24 May 2016), 11-12.
[533] Mrs. Emma Moulin interview, 12 July 1973, Canadian Plains Research Centre, http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/document.php/01117.Moulin,%20Emma%20(Carol%20Pearlstone).pdf (accessed 24 May 2016), 3.
[534] Mrs. Adelaide Ranger interview, 19 July 1973, Canadian Plains Research Center, Indian History Film Project, http://hdl.handle.net/10294/2279 (accessed February 28, 2017), 7.
[535] Fred Paulhus interview, 18 July 1973, Canadian Plains Research Center, Indian History Film Project, http://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/2278 (accessed 12 April 2017), 5.
[536] Antoine Ferguson interview, 17 July 1973, Canadian Plains Research Center, Indian History Film Project, http://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/2201 (accessed April 12, 2017), 6.
[537] Ibid, 10.

Some Métis communities had a largely negative view of Riel and the Métis soldiers at the time of the conflict. Scholar Mandy Fehr has conducted oral history research around Ile-à-la-Crosse, the birthplace of Louis Riel Sr. and the resting place of Riel's sister Marguerite-Marie Riel. She notes that local histories explain that the community actually feared Riel and his soldiers, and sought refuge on Cross Island. She also notes that elders in nearby Patuanak still tell stories of their ancestors helping the evacuees.[538] Views of Riel and 1885 differed greatly from one Métis community to another, and varied even within some communities.

Dumont and Riel were also very popular in French Canada, and in 1887 and 1888 Dumont was invited to speak as part of Honoré Mercier's election campaign.[539] Following Riel's execution, popular sentiment in Quebec sided with the Métis. Mercier, speaking at a rally where an effigy of John A. Macdonald was hanging by its neck from a rope, declared of Riel: "Our poor brother is dead. He has been sacrificed to the fanaticism of the Orangemen." Future Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, speaking at the same rally, said "Had I been born on the banks of the Saskatchewan I would myself have shouldered a musket to fight against the neglect of the government and the shameless greed of speculators."[540] The Quebec view of Riel was sympathetic, but stripped him of his Métis identity. Dumont, meanwhile, was used more as an election prop. Owram explains that French Canada simply took what parts of the story served their present purposes:

> As a result Louis Riel the Metis became Louis Riel the French-Catholic and his cause a defence of the true faith and of the minority language rather than a defence of a way of life or a frontier people.[541]

Riel and Dumont cast a long shadow that sometimes covered rank-and-file Métis veterans in relative obscurity. This was especially true in English and French Canada, but even in Métis communities it could be the case. At Batoche, however, the memory of fallen family members was far too traumatic to be ignored. The Saint Antoine-de-Padoue cemetery at Batoche became a focus for those who wished to commemorate the defenders of the Métis cause. The process

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[538] Mandy Fehr, "My mom tends to tell it the Catholic way. I'd tell it my way, the right way." Local histories of the 1885 Resistance." Paper delivered at the 2016 Canadian Catholic History Association conference, June 2, 2016 in Calgary, Alberta, 4-5.
[539] Michael Barnholden, *Gabriel Dumont Speaks*, 7.
[540] As quoted in Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada*, 131.
[541] Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," 323. Also Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada*, 32-71.

began almost immediately after the battle of Batoche, when priests buried the bodies of nine soldiers in a mass grave. In the following years, little else was done to mark the site – but then, on 23 July 1901 a stone monument was erected to commemorate the Métis, Cree and Dakota who had fallen at the battles of Duck Lake, Fish Creek and Batoche.[542]

Figure 23: 1885 monument at Batoche graveyard. Photo by author.

As with memorials in English Canada, the Batoche monument was a community effort, built under the direction of a committee. The committee's chair was Moise Ouellette, one of the men who had travelled to South Dakota to bring Riel back to Canada in 1884. The memorial was less grand than the statues in Winnipeg, Ottawa, Toronto, and Port Hope, but in 1901 stood as tall as anything else in the cemetery, which was itself located on a rise overlooking the South Saskatchewan River. Three sides of the memorial are inscribed with the names of Métis soldiers who died at Duck Lake, Fish Creek, and Batoche. The fourth side lists Cree and Dakota warriors who died in battle, although it does not list which battle. The monument itself is topped by a simple stone cross. The strong presence of the Christian cross – and the fact that the names of First Nations warriors are lumped together rather than being listed under the various battles they

[542] 1885 monument, Batoche graveyard, Batoche National Historic Site, visited by the author in October 2015.

participated in – suggests that First Nations had little input into the memorial, and that their sacrifice was being interpreted through a particular French Catholic Métis narrative.

Figure 24: Mass grave at Batoche. Photo by the author.

The next Métis memorials erected at Batoche were the tomb of Gabriel Dumont – the "great great big tombstone" Adelaide Ranger had spoken of – and the mass grave for the Métis who fell at Batoche. The mass grave featured a series of wooden crosses enclosed in a fence. It is uncertain when the crosses were first put up, but by the early 1900s, there were already postcards of the mass grave in circulation.[543]

Dumont's death also garnered attention in English Canada. On 21 May, a front-page story in the *Globe* announced his passing, claiming, "Dumont up to the day of his death retained the implicit confidence of the Metis and Indians, who almost worshipped him.[544] The headline to a 26 May 1906 article about his funeral in the *Toronto Globe* referred to Dumont as "Riel's Able Lieutenant," and noted that "…fully one hundred French half-breeds and Indians attended

[543] "Graves of Metis killed at Batoche Battle," Postcard, Box no. 110, LAC.
[544] "Gabriel Dumont Dead: Was Prominent Figure in the Riel Rebellion," *The Toronto Globe*, May 22, 1906, Globe and Mail: Canada's Heritage from 1844, 1.

the funeral".[545] Many in English Canada held a grudging respect for the Métis leader. A Winnipeg newspaper reporting on his death stated that "Dumont was in reality the brains of the campaign carried on by the rebels":

> Had he commanded at Batoche instead of Riel, the story of the battle might have had a very different ending, and the rebellion have been much more difficult for General Middleton and the Canadian Volunteers to quell.[546]

It seems possible that this idea – that Dumont could have fought more effectively without Riel holding him back – came from Dumont himself, as he promoted it in his own accounts of 1885.

Regardless of where the idea of Dumont as the "real" Métis leader of 1885 came from, it was a powerful narrative because Dumont was a compelling figure. A more extensive Toronto obituary printed on 23 June 1906 characterized Dumont as "…the beau ideal frontiersman of Canadian history", and argued that he "…displayed a capacity that had it been turned in a right direction would have made him a national hero."[547] The author of the obituary did not extend his respect for Dumont to Indigenous people more generally. The Métis were described as incapable of truly recognizing Dumont's importance: "As it is, Dumont has died an amnestied rebel, unhonoured even among the people who knew him best. To the slow half-breed mind the rebellion is not history; it is an incident in their lives."[548] This conflicted directly with the descriptions of other English-Canadian writers who claimed that the Métis and First Nations "worshipped" Dumont. As such, this can be taken as a minority opinion, but it also might speak to the English-Canadian desire to claim someone whom they considered a remarkable man, and to separate him from other Métis. Rather than being emblematic of the Métis, Dumont was to be considered an exception. The author also continued the tradition of claiming that a general "Indian war" was a very real possibility in 1885, and that Dumont and Riel had been nearly successful in instigating it:

> The success of his [Dumont's] mission [securing First Nations allies] will be apparent when it is remembered that as far as the Rockies the Indians on every

[545] "Burial of Dumont," *The Toronto Globe*, May 26, 1906, Globe and Mail: Canada's Heritage from 1844, 7.
[546] "Riel's Lieutenant Dies Near Batoche: Gabriel Dumont Expired Unexpectedly on Saturday Last, unknown Winnipeg paper, 1906, in MU5442, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, Ontario Historical Society Scrapbooks, Archives of Ontario.
[547] Roy H. Mitchell, "Gabriel Dumont," *Toronto Globe*, Saturday, 23 June 1906, in MU5442, Northwest Rebellion scrapbook, Ontario Historical Society Scrapbooks, Archives of Ontario.
[548] Ibid.

> reserve sat up nights beating their tom-toms and dancing in full war-paint, only waiting the word to march to Batoche to join in the hostilities of '85.[549]

For First Nations warriors who in the popular version of events were even slower than the slow-minded Métis, there was even less in the way of memorials and monuments in the years following 1885. There were no official monuments to the warriors who had died at the battles of Cut Knife Hill or Frenchman's Butte. There was a mass grave for the eight men who were hanged for their involvement in the Frog Lake Massacre, but this did not become a public memorial in the way the cemetery at Batoche did. Stonechild and Waiser convincingly argue that the executions were meant to dissuade Indigenous people from future armed insurrection; they note that John A. Macdonald wrote to Indian Commissioner Dewdney on the eve of the hanging, stating that the executions "… ought to convince the Red Man that the White Man governs."[550] Some Chiefs, such as Thunderchild, also publicly supported the hanging. Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising that most Indigenous people stayed away from the burial site. In the tense atmosphere that followed the conflict, who would want to be seen publicly commemorating men condemned by the state for murder?

This reticence would be passed down through the generations. When interviewed in 1973, Charlie Chief of the Seekaskootch reserve at Onion Lake, Saskatchewan, whose grandfather was among those hanged, admitted he had never visited the burial site. At the same time, Chief did share stories he had heard about his grandfather's bravery in the face of death:

> He was not scared. He walked to the gallows singing a song. It is said seven others were hanged at the time. Also he said a few words just before he was hanged and also sang till the trap was sprung. That was the end of my grandfather.[551]

Chief also claimed his grandfather had not killed anyone during the massacre, but had only shot his gun in the air.[552] Don Chastis, a descendant of one of the warriors who fought at Cut Knife Hill, also recalled stories he had been told about the courage of those who were executed. It appears that right from the beginning, there was a counter-narrative to the Canadian government's story of Frog Lake. Stonechild and Waiser note that at the very least, there was a

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[549] Ibid.
[550] Quoted in Waiser and Stonechild, *Loyal till Death*, 221.
[551] Jimmy and Charlie Chief interview, 18 July 1973, Canadian Plains Research Center, Indian History Film Project, http://ourspace.uregina.ca/handle/10294/948 (accessed 14 April 2017), 6.
[552] Ibid, 5.

sense among the Indigenous population that the government had overreacted by choosing to execute eight people. [553]

At least one Cree man, a writer and priest, became obsessed with the massacre and the dark shadow it cast upon First Nations people. Edward Ahenakew was born in 1885 at Sandy Lake Reserve near Prince Albert, and was educated, in part, at a residential school operated by the Anglican Church. In 1912, he was ordained as a priest and went to Onion Lake to do missionary work.[554] Ahenakew would spend a good part of his time collecting and cataloguing Indigenous stories and legends. From the very beginning of his career, however, the Cree priest showed a particular interest in the story of the Frog Lake massacre. By 1915 he was writing poems about it – poems that very much kept to the white settler version of events but also showed a growing sympathy for the Indigenous perspective. Interestingly, even Ahenakew's writing process shows how malleable memory can be. A line referring to the dead at Frog Lake refers to them as "Who by Big Bears [sic] command did fall" but has been crossed out, and replaced with a new verse: "Shot down with cruelty to the ground." Did Ahenakew change his poem after learning that Big Bear had opposed the killings? Later on in the same poem, Ahenakew tries to make the case that First Nations are no longer as "savage" as they once were:

> No more the Indians seeks the scalp / Nor hideous paint besmears his face / Those 30 years have done their work / They've curbed the Indian spirit wild / They've cooled the blood lust's fiery heat / and left a listless spirit mild.[555]

Sometime before writing this poem – there is no date in his journal, but the writer does mention it has been "nearly thirty years" since Frog Lake – Ahenakew began to shift his view of the massacre. The priest wrote his thoughts in prose about the massacre, which was taking on greater and greater importance in his mind. He called it "Perhaps the one greatest blot in annals of the North Western Indians," and noted that "Much has been said & written regarding this deplorable event." Despite his condemnations, Ahenakew also protested that in white accounts

[553] As reported in Stonechild and Waiser, *Loyal till Death*, 227.
[554] *A Checklist of the Papers of Edward Ahenakew*, "Introduction," R-1 Papers of Edward Ahenakew, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, 1.
[555] "Poems," File 9, R-1 Papers of Edward Ahenakew, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

of the massacre, First Nations warriors were often portrayed as if they had an "…innate love of shedding blood."[556]

> I have taken a careful investigation regarding this event and the events that led up to it and while I am not trying to exonerate my countrymen, yet I cannot help feeling that lack of judgement & discretion on the part of some of the white men concerned party led to their untimely end.[557]

Ahenakew went on to list the challenges and injustices faced by First Nations people in general, and those who lived at Frog Lake in particular. "What people," Ahenakew asked, "unless devoid absolutely of spirit would not feel a certain amount of regret and chagrin if placed in a similar situation?"[558] Ahenakew believed the Frog Lake massacre had unjustly stained the reputation of First Nations in the Northwest, and he felt a need to set the record straight. He wrote that "…truth must be the first consideration with me, when a grave matter such as the character of a nation is in question."[559] Public commemoration of the First Nations veterans might not have been happening in the years following 1885, but Indigenous people were certainly speaking about it and remembering it. What was more, people like Ahenakew, who straddled the line between First Nations and white settler culture, were writing about it and questioning the English-Canadian version of events. In concluding his recounting of the Frog Lake massacre and the causes of it, Ahenakew could not help but laud – however obliquely – the resistance of First Nations people:

> Nearly thirty years have elapsed since & many of us younger men born since have been educated & those of us in whom the Indian spirit is not altogether dead, has been partially reawakened by education cannot but feel, as I do, a sorrow that such a thing should ever have taken place, but once again I say, you may kick around a [illegible] and he'll fawn around & love you the more, but think twice before you kick an Indian the third time, or even the second time.[560]

Indigenous veterans – both First Nations and Métis – remembered their 1885 experiences quietly, and almost exclusively within their own communities. Conversely, Canadian militia veterans, continued to celebrate their past achievements proudly and publicly – and often with the continuing support of local, provincial and federal governments.

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[556] "First gray hair," in "Poems," File 9, R-1 Papers of Edward Ahenakew, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[557] Ibid.
[558] Ibid.
[559] Ibid.
[560] Ibid.

**Reunions and Remembering**

As the events of 1885 receded further and further into living memory, veterans for the Northwest Field Force continued to seek one another out and formed veterans associations where they could share their memories and promote their vision of the past in the wider public sphere. Some of these associations have left scant evidence of their existence. The City of Toronto Museum Section possesses a large Union Jack parade flag, emblazoned with the words "Northwest Field Force 1885 Association."[561]


Figure 25: Northwest Field Force Association flag. City of Toronto Museum Section.

It is the only relic of this association the author could locate, but this was not the only veterans group in the city. In 1896 – the same year Toronto's rebellion memorial was unveiled – the Battleford Column Association was formed by those men who had marched to the relief of Battleford in 1885. The Association's constitution listed the following goals:

> To keep a Roll, containing the names and addresses of the members, to promote comradeship and keep up a friendly connection between all ranks who served in

[561] Northwest Field Force 1885 Association Union Jack Flag, City of Toronto Museum Section.

> the Battleford Column North-West Field Force of Canada in 1885, to hold an Annual Re-union of Members, to be an adjunct to the Militia Force of Canada, and for social purposes.[562]

These associations not only helped old soldiers keep their own memories alive – they also helped keep the volunteers in the public memory. In May of 1899, Toronto's *Mail and Empire* reported on celebrations organized by the Batoche Column Association – yet another veteran's association – to mark the fourteenth anniversary of the battle. The ceremony was attended by "…the veterans, a section of the militia, the school children, and the multitude":

> Beyond the ropes, however, were thousands of interested spectators, a large percentage of whom were children, attracted by the presence of the parade of the school cadets, and the fact that the schools were contributing floral offerings.[563]

Speeches at the event included Major Manley, the president of the Association, as well as the Honourable George W. Ross, Ontario's Minister of Education. Ross declared "…the indications showed that there were young men to take the places of the heroes who fought in 1885," and that "…the military spirit had been infused into the schools," thereby linking 1885 to education and patriotism. There were also speeches from several campaign veterans, including one Major Helliwell of the Midland Battalion, who noted how grateful he felt towards the citizens of Toronto for how they received the remains of Colonel Williams in 1885. Toronto's Mayor closed the speeches by noting Canadians were "…all indebted to the citizen soldier." Many speakers commented on how enthusiastically Toronto welcomed the triumphant volunteers back home fourteen years before, and implored Canadians to uphold their martial spirit.[564] The official narrative in Toronto had changed little since the end of the conflict. If anything, the militaristic and patriotic elements had come even further to the forefront.

Not all commemoration was as public as the fourteenth anniversary. On 13 May, following the celebration in Queen's Park, the Batoche Column Association also held a reunion dinner, which by 1899 was already an annual event. The 1899 celebration was the biggest yet. According to one paper, this was because of an influx of members from other corps who had not previously realized they were eligible for membership in the association – although news that the

[562] Battleford Column Association Constitution, as adopted March 1896, Queen's Own Rifles' Museum, 4.
[563] "Batoche Heroes' Decoration Day: The Monument in Queen's Park Loaded With Flowers," *Toronto Mail & Empire*, May 15, 1899, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 53.
[564] Ibid.

Governor General had accepted the role of Honourary President likely added to the prestige of the organization as well.[565] The dinner, held at Webb's parlours – the same location used for the reunion dinners of the Red River Expeditionary Force Association – also included representatives of the Battleford Column Association, the association for the veterans of the 1866 Fenian Raids and the Red River Expeditionary Force Association.[566] As time went by, the veterans of 1885 would increasingly link themselves to veterans of other Canadian conflicts. It was a feedback loop where the veterans lent greater legitimacy to other organizations, which in turn further legitimized the volunteers of 1885.

In Winnipeg, the 90th Regiment also held annual reunions to commemorate their first battle at Fish Creek. In 1909 the Fish Creek Dinner included toasts from both the Premier and the Chief Justice of Manitoba, as well as the Mayor of Winnipeg, Samuel Steele, and J.W. Dafoe, publisher of the *Manitoba Free Press*.[567] A 1909 dinner program included the words to the tune that is now the official song of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. The melody is colloquially known as "Pork, beans and hard tack," referring to those staple foods the soldiers ate while on the campaign trail. Like much of the literature produced by the troops, the lyrics focused on the hardships of day-to-day life on the march, rather than on daring actions. The words also perpetuated the myth of the citizen soldier:

> When we embarked at Winnipeg, as chirpy as could be,
> We thought we were out for a bit of a lark, about a two weeks spree,
> But when we got to Fort Qu'Appelle we found it different then,
> Our tents in a row, we pitched in the snow, just like the real soldier men.[568]

The following year, the celebration included a commemorative church parade. Written on the back of an invitation card were the words "Lest We Forget." It is a phrase that originated in an 1897 poem by Rudyard Kipling. Canadians tend to associate the phrase with the First World

[565] Unknown Toronto paper, May 16, 1899, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario, 54.
[566] Ibid.
[567] "Ninetieth Regiment: Fish Creek Anniversary Dinner, Thursday, 22nd April, 1909, Toast List," North West Field Force, Box 4, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[568] "Anniversary of Fish Creek: 90th Regt. Banquet to Manitoba Hall, On Thursday, April 22nd, 1909, North West Field Force, Box 4, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.

War, but this invitation indicates it was in popular use at least four years before that conflict broke out, and was being applied to veterans of 1885.[569]

The conflict of 1885 in general, and the battle of Fish Creek in particular, became key to the mythology of the 90th Regiment. In addition to a regimental song, 1885 also gave the unit its nickname and motto. The nickname – Little Black Devils – comes from an apocryphal story about the Battle of Fish Creek. According to the tale, a captured Métis soldier expressed confusion over the regiment's dark green coats, exclaiming: "The red coats we know, but who are those little black devils?" The Latin motto "Hosti acie Nominati" is derived from the same story, translating as "named by the enemy."[570] It is also worth noting that the regiment's tradition of an annual Fish Creek Regimental dinner continues to this day.[571] The Royal Winnipeg Rifles (formerly the 90th) is not alone in this practice; although 1885 is not as central to their identity, the Royal Regiment of Canada – formerly the 10th Regiment – still holds annual Battle of Batoche dinners in Toronto.[572]

As well as reunions and public events, supporters of the volunteers continued to advocate for new monuments and memorials as the 1800s ended and the 1900s began. Starting in 1897, the Battleford Column Association pushed for the erection of a bronze memorial tablet in the Armouries in Toronto, in order to honour those in the column who were killed or wounded during the Northwest campaign. A committee was formed and consent was received from the Dominion's Minister of Militia, who donated a bronze field piece to be melted down as material for the tablet. The rest of the cost for erecting the plaque - $200 – was to be raised from the members of the association.[573]

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[569] "90th Regiment, 13th Field Battery and the Veterans Church Parade in Commemoration of the Battle of Fish Creek, Christ Church, Winnipeg, Sunday, April 1910," Edward Cargill Armstrong File, North-West Field Force Box 4, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[570] "The Royal Winnipeg Rifles," http://www.royalwinnipegrifles.com/the-regiment (accessed 18 April 2017).
[571] "Fish Creek Regimental Dinner," http://www.royalwinnipegrifles.com/fish-creek-regimental-dinner/ (accessed April 18, 2017).
[572] "Royal Regiment of Canada Association: Coming events for 2014," http://www.rregtc-assoc.org/2013/02/12/coming-events-for-2013/ (accessed 17 April 2017).
[573] Memorial Tablet, Toronto, January 15, 1898, Circular to the Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Men of the Queen's Own Rifles, the Ex-members, and Members of the Reserve of the Queen's Own Rifles and the Members of the Battleford Colum Association, from the officers of the Battleford Column Association, in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.

The official unveiling took place on 10 December 1899 and was performed by the Governor-General Lord Minto, who had himself served as an aide-de-camp under Middleton during the conflict.[574] His prominent role – and the presence of other dignitaries such as the Mayor – only further emphasized that the volunteers still enjoyed the full support of the state. Major W.G. Mutton, president of the Battleford Column Association, spoke at the unveiling and explained the reason the organization had pushed for this new memorial:

> In raising this permanent memorial to our former comrades, we realize that, in comparison with campaigns such as our Empire is now engaged in, that of the Northwest field force of 1885 was a matter of comparatively small moment, but it was an important and trying chapter in Canadian history and marked a great step forward in unifying the northern half of this continent into a national Canada.[575]

Perhaps the Major felt he needed to justify further memorials to this "little war" in the face of the much larger and drawn-out conflict that had recently begun in South Africa. It seemed, however, that the current war was only enhancing the lustre of what was perceived as a past triumph of Canadian arms. The *Globe* noted that the unveiling was attended by thousands, and exclaimed that "The war spirit is thoroughly aroused in Toronto, and no stronger evidence of this fact could be found than in the numbers and character of the crowd that filled the spacious building."[576]

In October 1908, the Batoche Column Association also managed to get a similar tablet placed on the wall of the Armouries. This memorial was unveiled by Ontario's Lieutenant Governor, who emphasized the importance of the conflict to Canada:

> …looking back he did not think they fully realized at the time the danger in which the country was placed. Now that they were able to take a more extended view of the situation, they understood that in 1885 there was a very great danger of a disruption of Canada: It was with feelings of profound gratitude to the gallant men who went to the front that he now unveiled a tablet in their memory, because he could not forget that those volunteers did a very great deal to preserve the unity of the Dominion.[577]

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[574] "Memorial Service at the Armouries, Toronto, Sunday, December 10th, 1899," Whitney (James P) papers, MU3117, Archives of Ontario.
[575] "Memorial was Unveiled: Lord Minto, One of the Old Brigade, Officiated Yesterday Afternoon in the Armouries," in Queen's Own Rifles 1860-1950, Red River Expedition 1870, MU2599, Bruce Harmon Collection, Archives of Ontario.
[576] "Fallen Comrades: Honoured by Survivors of the Battleford Column," *The Toronto Globe*, December 11, 1899, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Globe and Mail, 7.
[577] "Fish Creek and Batoche Heroes: Memorial Unveiled by Sir W. Mortimer Clark," The *Toronto Globe*, Oct 30, 1908, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Globe and Mail, 12.

This talk of unity, first in 1899 and then in 1908, was relatively new. In the immediate wake of 1885, press and officials had spoken of duty to country and patriotism, but the word "unity" appeared almost nowhere. Now, as larger imperial conflicts began to overshadow 1885 and a more aggressive French-Canadian nationalism began to appear in Quebec, the volunteers added a new dimension to their heroism. They had not simply put down a small but troublesome rebellion; they had united the nation, and thereby saved it. Such discourse also became prominent in the formerly separatist province of Nova Scotia – in 1907, Governor General Grey unveiled a plaque in Halifax commemorating that city's contribution to the Northwest Field Force, where he declared: "The Battalion… went out Nova Scotians, they returned Canadians." Historian David Sutherland also notes that Prime Minister Robert Borden would later write in his memoirs that "The Riel Rebellion did more to unite Nova Scotia with the rest of Canada than any event that had occurred since Confederation."[578] Sutherland is quick to point out, however, that at the 1907 unveiling, only twelve veterans were in attendance.[579] There could be many reasons for this small turnout – outmigration and death being the most obvious – but it did suggest that Nova Scotia had not embraced its veterans the way Manitoba and Ontario had. Sutherland notes that an 1885 veterans' club started in Halifax in the 1890s was short lived, and campaign veterans did not move into positions of prominence in the same numbers as elsewhere.[580]

**Marking sites of memory**

As the years went by, veterans and their supporters – particularly 1885 veterans – continued to seek out fresh recognition. Until the 1900s, most monuments and memorials to the volunteers were based in English-Canadian towns and cities where the veterans lived or their battalions were stationed. Soon after the century began, interest arose in building memorials where the events of 1885 had taken place. One of the first places to see some memorials constructed by white settler Canadians – in this case the Northwest Mounted Police - was the site of the Frog Lake massacre. In 1909, the bodies of the victims were gathered together and placed in a single plot with a fence to enclose the gravesite. Each grave was marked by an iron cross

[578] As quoted in David A. Sutherland, "Halifax's Encounter with the North-West Uprising of 1885, *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* (Vol. 13, 2010), 73.
[579] Ibid, 75.
[580] Ibid.

with the date of the massacre inscribed on it.[581] The *Globe* noted that "Owing to their superstition, no Indians would help with the work of gathering the bodies", although it was unclear where they had acquired this information.[582]

For the volunteers, it was not Frog Lake but the battlefields of 1885 that held the greatest appeal as memorial sites – and perhaps no battlefield was more appealing than Batoche. By the turn of the century, it was already becoming something of a tourist site, albeit one that was off the beaten path. In 1907 or 1908 William J. Raymond published a travel piece about his visit to Batoche, which he called "one of the most peaceful spots in all the west to-day".[583] Raymond's article constantly juxtaposes the hamlet's quiet and sleepy state with the violent clash that took place there twenty-three years before. Raymond is also condescending toward the Métis, portraying them as sleepy, simple, and yet somewhat exotic, with the French and Indigenous cultural links: "Homesteaders of alien tongue were met, and they looked as deliberate and contented as their oxen."[584] The Métis he encounters are described as taciturn, meditative, and not much for conversation. It is all part of the picturesque image Raymond creates for Batoche – a place lost in time, forgotten by the modern world. The South Saskatchewan River, for example is described as flowing "…into what is still a region of mystery, of appalling loneliness and of fascination." The author contrasts this romantic land with the "new west", which he says "…is concerned exclusively with the present and future."[585] Raymond focuses on fading signs of the conflict that once took place here, describing how time is slowly erasing this romantic past:

> Wherever you may go on the field of Batoche are holes, perhaps only a few inches deep, and all filled with muddy water. They are all that remain of Gabriel Dumont's once death-dealing rifle pits. Along the edge of each clump of brush they are to be found just screened by the outlying trees of the bluffs. The underbrush growth of two decades has made them seem a bewildering chaos of holes, but as the lay of the land grows upon one he cannot fail to see with what ingenuity they were placed that they might command every trail and every approach. One long, straggling line from east to west marks the line of defences

[581] "The Frog Lake Massacres, To the Editor of The Globe" Letter to the Editor, N.D., The Riel Rebellion, F1032-5-0-2, Osler Family papers, Archives of Ontario, 84.
[582] "Buried at Frog Lake: Bodies of Eight Victims of Cree Massacre in 1885 Given New Sepulchre," Special Despatch to The Globe, *The Globe*, Aug 10, 1909, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 1.
[583] William J. Raymond, "A Visit to Batoche: Memories of the Rebellion," unknown publication, Riel Rebellion, 1885, F1032-5-0-2, Osler Family papers, Archives of Ontario.
[584] Ibid.
[585] Ibid.

> upon which the Ninetieth and Tenth Grenadiers charged, and which they finally captured.[586]

The slow disappearance of the Métis fortifications mirrors Riel and Dumont's defeat in 1885, and only adds further poignancy to the romance of their lost cause. Raymond is clearly not interested in any intentional Métis or Indigenous commemoration – either the 1901 monument or Dumont's 1906 tombstone. For him, the fading rifle pits are a more fitting monument. They also match his perception of the Métis as a simple, pastoral people. In Raymond's view, the Métis are so quaint and rural they are almost part of the landscape itself, or perhaps they are fading into it in the same way as the rifle pits – being reclaimed by nature.

Many of the volunteers did not feel that the disappearing rifle pits were memorial enough to the sacrifice of their comrades. In 1910, the Department of Militia and Defence received a petition from the Veterans and Members of the Imperial Service Medal Association, many of whom were members of the 1885 Field Force. The petition asked for monuments to be erected to the men who had died during the conflict and had been buried at the battle sites.[587] Inquiries were made with the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (RNWMP). Comptroller White of the Police responded that the bodies of those who had died North of Battleford – at battles such as Cut Knife Hill – were already buried in one plot, "…without considering for whether they were Police, Militia, or employees of the Indian Department." White also offered the Police's service in locating and re-interring those buried at other battlefields.[588]

By November of 1910, the Police had recommended that all grave sites should be protected by a permanent fence and that plain headstones should be erected over each group of graves, but little else had been accomplished and activity now stopped with snow on the ground in Alberta and Saskatchewan.[589] The veterans began to grow impatient. In December of 1910 an

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[586] Ibid.
[587] Letter from H.F. Jarvis, Acting Deputy Minister of Militia, to Lieut.-Colonel F. White, Comptroller, R.N.W.M.P, September 19, 1910, in Rebellion of 1885 – Request of veterans and members of I.S.M. Association for erection of monument to men killed in, RG18, vol. 395, file no. 503-10, LAC.
[588] Letter from Lieut.-Colonel F. White, Comptroller, to H.F. Jarvis, Acting Deputy Minister of Militia, Ottawa, September 21, 1910, in Rebellion of 1885 – Request of veterans and members of I.S.M. Association for erection of monument to men killed in, RG18, vol. 395, file no. 503-10, LAC.
[589] Letter from Commissioner Perry, R.N.W.M.P, to Lieut.-Colonel F. White, Comptroller, R.N.W.M.P, 29 November 1910, in Rebellion of 1885 – Request of veterans and members of I.S.M. Association for erection of monument to men killed in, RG18, vol. 395, file no. 503-10, LAC.

unknown veteran wrote to Member of Parliament Thomas MacNutt, expressing concern about the unmarked graves:

> Referring to the matter of the graves of our poor comrades who were left on the field at Batoche Fish Creek; I may state that I spent a month of my time and money going over these fields last fall to locate these graves and it is deplorable to think that for a quarter of a century they have been unmarked. I found at Batoche a beautiful marble monument to the rebels, and where our fellows fell or were buried is still unmarked, as at Fish Creek also.[590]

Later in the letter, the veteran noted that "…although there has been considerable memorials, I believe nothing come before the House," likely referring to the fact that all 1885 memorials had been erected chiefly through private subscription.[591]

In February of 1911, MacNutt received a more formal letter from the Imperial Veterans' Association of Canada, complaining of the perceived lack of action regarding the petition for memorials at Batoche and Fish Creek. "Our Association have almost despaired of ever hearing anything definite from Sir Frederick Borden's Department," declared J. Hooper, the secretary for executive. Hooper noted that the veterans were holding a major reunion in July, and that the idea of raising funds for a national monument was being suggested. Hooper felt that this should not happen: "It was to avoid such a contingency that the Parliament of Veterans deemed it wise to put the matter in your hands, and they are indeed, extremely pleased to note you are pushing the matter."[592]

Soon, it was not just the veterans petitioning about the graves. In April the Daughters of the Empire wrote the Department of Militia and Defence offering to look after the graves of soldiers buried in Saskatoon, if only the Department could tell them where the remains were buried.[593] By the summer the RNWMP had identified the grave sites at Fish Creek and Batoche, but were still working to identify the burial site of a soldier in Saskatoon. At both Batoche and

[590] Letter from unknown sender to Thomas McNutt, M.P., December 12, 1910, in Rebellion of 1885 – Request of veterans and members of I.S.M. Association for erection of monument to men killed in, RG18, vol. 395, file no. 503-10, LAC, 1.
[591] Ibid, 3.
[592] Letter from Sgd. J Hooper, Hon. Sec. Headquarters Veterans Brigade, to Hon. Thos. MacNutt, February 27, 1911, in Rebellion of 1885 – Request of veterans and members of I.S.M. Association for erection of monument to men killed in, RG18, vol. 395, file no. 503-10, LAC.
[593] Letter from Wilma M.D. Morgan, Secretary of the Daughters of the Empire, Saskatoon, to the Secretary, Department of Militia, April 19th, 1911, in Rebellion of 1885 – Request of veterans and members of I.S.M. Association for erection of monument to men killed in, RG18, vol. 395, file no. 503-10, LAC.

Fish Creek, the Police recommended a single stone – in the former case because Gunner Phillips was the only soldier still buried there, and in the latter because it was not possible to identify individual graves.[594] By October 30, 1911, the Police reported that the new headstones and fencing were now fully in place.[595] The total cost, ultimately paid for by the Department of Militia and Defence, was $292.50.[596] The work was not perfect; the tombstone of Gunner Phillips, the only remaining volunteer buried at Batoche, was engraved with the incorrect date of death. It claimed Phillips had been killed in action 24 April 1885 – the date of the battle of Fish Creek.[597] Nonetheless, the work was done, on the request of the veterans.


Figure 26: The grave of Gunner Phillips, Batoche. Photo by the author.

Some English-Canadian visitors to the site remained unsatisfied. The grave of Gunner Phillips was not in an obvious location – even today, one has to take a narrow path along the edge of a cliff overlooking the river in order to find it. Those not specifically looking for the

[594] Letter from Sgd. C. Constantine, Supt. Commanding "F" Division, to The Commissioner, R.N.W.M. Police, 14 July 1911, Rebellion of 1885 – Request of veterans and members of I.S.M. Association for erection of monument to men killed in, RG18, vol. 395, file no. 503-10, LAC.
[595] Letter from Sd, P.W. Pennefather Insp., Commanding "F" Division, to the Commissioner, R.N.W.M. Police, 30 October 1911, in Rebellion of 1885 – Request of veterans and members of I.S.M. Association for erection of monument to men killed in, RG18, vol. 395, file no. 503-10, LAC.
[596] Statement of expenses incurred by the R.N.W.M. Police in connection with the erection of headstones, etc., over the graves of members of the Militia who lost their lives during the rebellion of 1885, in Rebellion of 1885 – Request of veterans and members of I.S.M. Association for erection of monument to men killed in, RG18, vol. 395, file no. 503-10, LAC.
[597] Tombstone of Gunner W.H. Phillips, Batoche National Historic Site.

grave are unlikely to come across it. On 24 April 1915, less than four years after the graves at Fish Creek and Batoche has been restored, John Hawkes, the Legislative Librarian in Regina, wrote to the Deputy Minister of the Interior in Ottawa requesting the federal government work to preserve the history that still existed at Batoche and Fish Creek. Like Raymond's article in 1909, Hawkes' letter listed many different features that were slowly decaying - the rifle pits used by Riel's soldiers, as well as the Priest's residence, the old Batoche store (which he claimed had been damaged by artillery), and the school house, which he claimed was the first one organized in the Northwest Territories.[598]

Hawkes' focus on the built heritage at Batoche might suggest a sympathetic view of Riel and the Métis. Another letter sent on the same day, however, suggests he held the more common English-Canadian perspective on the conflict. Hawkes spoke of the need to honour fallen Canadian soldiers, whose graves were currently on privately-owned land:

> Taking the burial ground at Fish Creek, for Instance, I would ask whether it is a decent thing that the bones of Canadian Soldiers who died in battle should be owned by an alien, who, I presume, can do what he likes with them.[599]

Again like Raymond, Hawkes uses the word "alien" to describe the Francophone Métis. Raymond's use of the word is condescending, but Hawkes' "alien" is used in a more hostile and derisive manner. The Métis are clearly not to be considered Canadian, or at least not the same kind of Canadian as the fallen soldiers. The implication is that the history at Fish Creek should be owned and interpreted by English Canadians, for English Canadians. "Aliens" could not be trusted with the past, which they would either ignore, or worse yet, desecrate.

**"Lifelong loyalty"**

For the first forty years after 1885, there seemed little doubt that the dominant view of the conflict in the Northwest presented the volunteers as heroes. More than that, it presented the volunteer as an ideal Canadian man – patriotic, dutiful, and able to tame the uncivilized wilderness through a combination of manful effort and modern technology. As Canadians became embroiled in larger conflicts, such as the Boer War and the First World War, one might

[598] Letter from John Hawkes, Legislative Librarian, to W.W. Cory, Esq., Deputy Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, April 24, 1915, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC, 1-2.
[599] Letter from John Hawkes, Legislative Librarian, to W.W. Cory, Esq., Deputy Minister of the Interior, April 24, 1915, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.

have expected the volunteers to fade away in the face of far more widespread, protracted, and costly conflicts, but it was often not the case. For many, the new wars – and the First World War in particular – only reinforced the narrative of 1885 as a heroic struggle to protect and expand British civilization in the face of barbarism. This can be seen in the letters of some veterans requesting replacement medals. During the war, some of those requests became very emotional indeed.

Over the course of the war, there were a number of applications to replace lost medals. There were also requests for medals an applicant was entitled to but had never received. Most of these inquiries were very matter-of-fact affairs, with documentation simply testifying to the loss and requesting a new medal.[600] Sometimes, however, an applicant would reveal their emotional reasoning in a letter. In July 1917, James Lappage of Montreal wrote to Ottawa requesting a medal for his service in the Red River expedition. "I received my land grant" Lappage explained, "but no medal. They say I am entitled to one, if so I would be very thankful for it."[601] The letter made it clear that Lappage was not seeking a scrip or other recompense – he wanted the prestige of recognition. It was explained to Lappage that he had already received the General Service medal, with a Fenian Raid 1866 clasp, and so he changed his request, asking instead for a Red River 1870 clasp, which he duly received.[602]

William Seader was another soldier who had never received a medal owed to him, in this case for his service in 1885. Seader wrote to Ottawa in 1918 from London, England. He had just returned from France, where he was serving in the trenches with the Australian forces.[603] Upon receipt of his medal on his return to Australia, Seader wrote an emotional letter to express his thanks, describing the award as "much coveted, though long delayed":

> I will be proud to wear this symbol of loyalty pinned next to my present service medal as evidence of my lifelong loyalty & service to the Royal family and Empire and can assure you that this will give me a great deal of comfort in my grief at the loss of my son who died a glorious death fighting for our beloved

[600] Application for Northwest Canada, 1885 medal, Walter Griffith Edward Boyd, vol. 9344, part 1 file no. HQ-51-4-95. See also "In the Matter of the loss of Medal by Sam Anderson," in Replacement Northwest Canada 1885 medal - Mr Anderson Sam, RG24, vol. 9344 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-92, LAC.
[601] Letter from James Lappage to Col. Panet, Secretary Military Council, July 31, 1917, in James Lappage, Montreal, Que., Application for medal, RG24, vol. 9344, file no. HQ-51-4-96, LAC.
[602] Letter from James Lappage to unknown, Aug 13, 1917, RG24, vol. 9344 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-97, LAC.
[603] Letter from William Seader, to the Secretary, Department of Militia & Defence, February 1918, in Sapper, William Seader, Appln. for Long Service Medal, RG24, vol. 9344 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-97, LAC.

> Empire. Although I have had to leave the firing line, I still have a son over there only 18 years of age doing his best to keep the glorious old flag flying.[604]

Seader had not only given his own blood to the Empire; he had given the blood of his own sons to the "glorious old flag." For Seader, even when faced with the industrial-scale death and destruction of the First World War, the 1885 Conflict did not fade away. Rather, it took on an even more powerful meaning – it became the beginning of a lifetime of service to a greater cause – the defence of his "beloved Empire."

Seader's interpretation of events was hardly singular. There is no doubt that in the immediate aftermath of 1885, English-Canadian society agreed that the conflict had been a tremendous victory for Canada and British civilization. As the conflict of 1885 receded further and further into the past, most Canadian militia veterans did not not come to see 1885 as a minor skirmish against an outnumbered and ill-equipped foe. Instead, some began to portray their service as even more pivotal than originally believed – to the unity of Canada, and ultimately, the Empire. Rather than be overshadowed by larger conflicts, 1885 took its place alongside them. The soldiers continued to hold reunions, to enjoy the favour of Canada's political elites, and to push for – and receive – further recognition in the form of new monuments. Their accolades even appear to have encouraged other veterans – from the Red River expedition and the Fenian Raids – to call for recognition of their own.

Métis and First Nations veterans of 1885, meanwhile, still languished in relative obscurity outside of communities such as Batoche. Even in Métis communities, Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont had a tendency to overshadow other veterans. As the First World War drew to a close, the volunteer narrative remained largely unchallenged in much of Canada, but this was not to remain the case indefinitely. As the federal government began to take an increasingly active role in heritage and commemoration from the 1920s onward, other voices would challenge the volunteers' grip on the public narrative of 1885. The volunteers would not give up their dominance easily, and for the rest of their lives, they would work to tell their story as they saw it, even in the face of increasingly vocal competing accounts from previously quiet memory communities.

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[604] Letter from William Seader, to the Secretary, Department of Militia & Defence, N.D., in Sapper, William Seader, Appln. for Long Service Medal, RG24, vol 9344 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-97, LAC.

## Chapter Five

## Shifting Memories and the Battle for Batoche

In July of 1999, an article appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* entitled: "Parks Canada rewrites Riel rebellion." Parks Canada plaques relating to the 1885 conflict were to be reworded for greater inclusiveness: "Under the policy, the history of the rebellion is being told not only from the historical record, but also from the perspective of Métis and the First Nations." Journalist Mohammed Adam noted that some historians were calling this process "revisionist," and "a disturbing trend."[605] What the author did not note is that this "disturbing trend" could be traced back to at least 1924, and the first federal attempt at commemoration on the battlefields of 1885.

In 1924, Parks Canada had first erected memorial plaques at Batoche, Cut Knife Hill, Frog Lake and Battleford by Parks Canada, under the direction of the newly minted Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC). The Board had been formed in 1919 to advise the federal government of historic locations worthy of recognition and preservation. Of the HSMBC's initial recommendations, the four sites from the 1885 conflict were the most significant set of non-fur trade sites in the west.[606] The story the four plaques told hewed closely to the narrative that the volunteers and their supporters had been forging in the nearly forty years since 1885. During that time, there had been no serious challenge to this story in English Canada. The numerous monuments and memorials commemorating the courage and bravery of Canada's volunteers were widely endorsed by state and society, and the story they told was seen as uncontroversial. But none of these monuments had ever before been located where the conflict had taken place, on the lands of the First Nations and Métis peoples who had fought against the volunteers.

Even before the unveiling of the Parks Canada plaques in 1925, the volunteers and their supporters found their narrative of 1885 publicly challenged for the first time ever. The plaques caused sparks that ignited a national debate about how best to remember the events of 1885. Before 1925, English Canadians had largely praised the volunteers' narrative as fostering unity

[605] Mohammed Adam, "Parks Canada rewrites Riel rebellion," in the *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 July 1999.
[606] Alan McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance", 423.

and patriotism. With the controversy over the plaques, some began to question whether the militia veterans' account of the past was too divisive, and whether more room was needed for other voices and perspectives. This did not mean the volunteers' nationalistic narrative was abandoned – either by the English-Canadian public or by the veterans themselves. To the contrary – the veterans continued to champion their memory of 1885 until the very end of their lives, and English-Canadian society continued to honour them and their story as it had before. Nevertheless, after 1925, cracks and fissures increasingly began to appear in the volunteers' narrative, and Métis and First Nations people began to ask for more space in the public memory. Despite these developments, it would take many years for public perceptions of the conflict to truly change – and before that could happen, the Canadian militia veterans of 1870 and 1885 had to die. Only when no one was left to defend the veterans and their memories could new pan-Canadian heroes finally emerge from the conflicts of the past. The old heroes then quickly faded from public discourse, obscured by the shifting mists of memory. The new heroes would not be the Indigenous veterans who had resisted the Northwest Field Force. Instead, their leaders – Riel, Dumont, Poundmaker and others – would take centre stage. Outside of their home communities, Indigenous veterans – both Métis and First Nations – would remain largely unknown. But by the end of the twentieth century, they would have the Canadian militia veterans to keep them company in that obscurity.

**Conflicting narratives and the battlefields of 1885**

In the early 1920s, however, those veterans were still alive and vigorously defending their shared understanding of the past. Requests for replacement medals continued to be received by the department of Militia and Defence as well as the Royal Northwest Mounted Police. In the spring of 1920, ex-NWMP Constable E.W. Todd, then a resident of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, received a replacement for his 1885 medal. He had written in December of 1919 explaining that the original had been stolen from him "…on a Baltimore & Chico train, between Baltimore and Mt. Airy, Md. in the summer of 1911".[607] In January of 1920, George S. Wood, then living in Chicago, Illinois, wrote the Department of Militia and Defence seeking a new

[607] Letter from E.W. Todd to Comptroller, Royal Northwest Mounted Police, December 26, 1919 in #1021, Ex/Constable E.W. Todd, R.N.W.M.P, in No. 1201, Ex-Constable, Todd E W, RNWMR, RG24, vol. 9344, file 51-4-106, LAC.

ribbon for his 1885 medal. Wood felt compelled to note that he had passed on his sense of patriotic duty to the next generation:

> As an illustration of the continuing value of military service, possibly it might be of interest for you to know that three of my sons, all captains of infantry, served with the American Expeditionary Forces in France; two of whom were cited for gallantry in action, one of the two being killed in action in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.[608]

It is worth noting that Wood had found a way to connect his service in 1885 to the greater conflict of the First World War – implicit in his statement was the idea that Wood's own military service had inspired his children to follow in his footsteps. While most veterans tied their story to service to Canada and the Empire, for Wood service itself was more the point, even if it was not service to the Empire, but to one of the Empire's allies instead.

Many in English-Canadian society remained sympathetic to the militia veterans of 1885. In 1921, Sergeant R.S. Kendall, Chief Constable in Calgary, Alberta, reported to the department of Militia and Defence that an engraved medal had been found on a Canadian Pacific Railroad train between Calgary and Gleichen. "As an old soldier myself," Kendall wrote, "…I know how Service medals are treasured in after years, and I can fully sympathize with any poor old chap who may have been unfortunate enough to lose his."[609] And as many people still had great admiration and sympathy for Canadian militia veterans, the Métis and First Nations were still portrayed as villains, or at best deluded pawns of Louis Riel. On 14 May 1920, Nathaniel Murdoch William John McKenzie, a former Hudson's Bay Company employee who had been working in the west during events of 1885, gave a talk for the Thunder Bay Historical Society entitled "The Halfbreed Rebellion of 1885." In McKenzie's view, Louis Riel was the clear villain of the piece and the Métis were his pawns. In the opening of his address he declared:

> I will be as brief as possible, and will at once say that the Rebellion of 1869-70 and the Rebellion of 1885, was the ambitious and malicious aspirations, having at the bottom of it all, selfish aggrandizement at the expense of a few unsophisticated halfbreeds, whom he was using as tools in trying to extort more money from the government for his own private use, when he would leave them in the lurch as he had done after the 1870 affair when he pocketed the money that was paid him to

[608] Letter from George S. Wood to Minister of War, January 13, 1920, in George S. Wood, in Wood G S – Service Bar Saskatchewan, RG24, vol. 9344, file 51-4-107, LAC.
[609] Letter from Sergeant R.S. Kendall to the Secretary, Militia Council, May 25, 1921, in Adamson, W T, Northwest Rebellion Medal, RG24, vol. 9344, file 51-4-109, LAC.

> leave the country for the time being and took up residence in the U.S.A., being at that time a fugitive from justice – I mean Louis Riel.[610]

There was also interest in capturing the First Nations and Métis point of view, however, and it appears that the veterans of 1885 were willing to speak out if they felt someone was inclined to listen. In February of 1924, Patrice Fleury of Duck Lake submitted a paper to the Prince Albert Historical Society detailing his life experiences, including the 1885 conflict. Fleury only wrote briefly about 1885, noting that "The regretable [sic] incidents that followed, you are all conversant with and I do not care to dwell on them at further length." Fleury did respond to some of the claims put forward by those who portrayed Riel as an evil mastermind plotting violence and murder. He believed that at the outset, negotiation could have averted disaster, "…but instead, a felling [sic] of aggression that we were being denied our rights was felt and the crowd got beyond of Riel and the older and steadier heads".[611] Even once military action was agreed upon, Fleury held that the reasons behind it were self-defence, and that Riel did not incite anyone:

> I was there – Why? I was compelled to take my stock in for safety as rumors were going around that troops had been mustered by order of the Government and we were to be attacked at any time, and also there was a rumor of a general uprising of the Indians – but I want to emphasize this and feel sure many still living could corroborate me, that not once did I hear an order given by Riel to induce the Indians to pillage or kill at this critical moment.

In post-war English Canada, the volunteer's narrative was still ascendant. In the heartland of the 1885 conflict, meanwhile, First Nations and Métis veterans were beginning to share their story more widely. It was in this heartland that the HSMBC planned the construction of new memorials to the 1885 conflict. The board had little interest in non-white, non-English perspectives. There was no Indigenous representation on the board whatsoever. The HSMBC did usually have a French-Canadian member, but as McCullough notes, in the early 1920s that one Francophone position was often in flux, with successive resignations.[612] As a result, there was no effective French-Canadian representation. This fact would strongly influence the

[610] "Halfbreed Rebellion of 1885," Address given by N.M.W.J McKenzie before the Thunder Bay Historical Society, 14 May 1920, in N.M.W.J. and Annie McKenzie family fonds, Archives of Manitoba, 1.
[611] "Read before Historical Society, Pr. Albert, Feb 13, 1924," A515 Fleury, Patrice, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, 6.
[612] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance", 424.

wording and tone of the 1885 plaques, and ultimately be responsible for the controversy that would follow.

Efforts to commemorate 1885 started off without much drama. Motions to establish monuments at four 1885 sites were moved by the board in May of 1923. A motion by the Board's Western representative, Judge J.B. Howay of Vancouver, read as follows:

> That in the opinion of the Board Batoche is a site of national importance, that its historic associations be recognized by placing a cairn or other durable monument and tablet with suitable inscription as soon as a proper title of a suitable site can be obtained.[613]

The Board unanimously approved the motion. But for whom was Batoche a site of national importance? An obvious answer would be Canadians, but it would soon become clear the board's definition of "Canadian" did not include the Métis. A supplementary commentary on the motion noted that the secretary was "to communicate with Sir William Otter or Professor Oliver for any suggestions they might care to make."[614] Otter was, of course, the commander of the Battleford Column of 1885. No one questioned whether Otter could be an objective advisor on text for the monuments – why would they? Militia veterans had been directly involved in the memorialization of 1885 since the dying days of the conflict. The HSMBC did not consult the Métis, however. This was also in keeping with precedent; no one had consulted Indigenous peoples about previous commemorative projects. The focus was to be on the gallant volunteers, not their adversaries. James Harkin, a member of the HSMBC as well as Parks Commissioner, asked in the same meeting whether the list of regiments that participated in the Northwest Rebellion was complete, noting this was "very important."[615] From the start, the monuments were envisioned by the HSMBC as a commemoration of Canada's victory over the opposing Métis and First Nations forces.

For many of the earlier memorials to the 1885 volunteers, there is little documentation describing how choices were made regarding the design of monuments or the wording of text. This is not the case for the 1924 plaques. For them, records exist about the decision-making process that led to their creation. These records show that at least one board member felt it was

[613] Extract from the Minutes of H.S. & M. Board of May 28th, 1923, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.
[614] Ibid.
[615] "Batoche Site - Oct 23", in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.

best if public memory was selective. In an October 1923 letter to John Harkin, Board Member Dr. James Coyne dismissed the idea of commemorating the less glorious moments of 1885. In doing so, he made explicit who these new memorials were meant to be commemorating:

> I am not quite sure of the expediency of advertising the retreat of Col. Otter, and the victory of Gabriel Dumont. In similar cases heretofore we have contended ourselves with honouring the memory of our own soldiers or citizens who fell.[616]

While Coyne was the only Board member to suggest ignoring certain aspects of the 1885 uprising, clearly the Board had already decided what was important to remember – and what was best forgotten. This was Burke's social amnesia in action.

The Board seemed to find no controversy in this approach, making no protest when Otter rewrote the Cut Knife Hill text so that the battle was presented as a Canadian success, rather than a setback.[617] The Frog Lake plaque, meanwhile, placed responsibility squarely on Big Bear for the massacre – something even many white Canadians at the time had recognized was not the case.[618] This is not to say the HSMBC was completely unaware of the tension the plaques might cause. Consultant H.F. Grassett aired some misgivings about the plaque at Batoche. On the surface, the Batoche plaque seemed less controversial than the others. The text did not transform defeat into victory, or explicitly assign blame. It read as follows:

> North West Rebellion / BATOCHE / Headquarters of the Rebels / Its capture by General Middleton, after four days fighting, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th May, / 1885, ended the Rebellion. The Midland Regiment, 10th Royal Grenadiers, 90th Regiment, / Winnipeg Battery, "A" Battery, Boulton's Mounted Infantry and French's Scouts took part / in the battle. [619]

In a letter to Otter, Grassett maintained that the text was factually true, but nonetheless made a peculiar statement hinting that the script might cause controversy in the Métis community:

> If such is intended to be anything more than an historical record, I would not favour it, for as a nation we should not endeavour to perpetuate the faults or

[616] Letter from James E. Coyne to J.B. Harkin, October 8, 1923, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, volume 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.
[617] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance," 425.
[618] Frog Lake Plaque, RG84, HS 10-3-4, Part 1, Brass Rubbing, c. 1923-24, LAC.
[619] Photograph of the HSMBC Tablet for Batoche Monument, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol, 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.

> mistakes of those misguided people who took up arms to obtain redress for their grievances, which subsequently were recognized by the Government.[620]

Grassett's remarks reveal a cognitive dissonance on display at the centre of the Batoche memorial. He expressed a fear that anything other than a "factual" memorial could stir up feelings of resentment among the Métis, but at the same time maintained that any such feelings were baseless.

Baseless or not, feelings of resentment did exist among the Métis, and of the four 1885 plaques, it would be the one at Batoche that would provoke the most public controversy. Problems started even before the monument had been erected, when Parks Canada attempted to secure a site near the battlefield for the monument, which was to be a cairn with the plaque attached, all surrounded by a fence.[621] In order to secure land, the government needed to negotiate with the Reverend Bishop J.H. Prudhomme of Prince Albert to acquire a small plot for the cairn.[622] Now that a French-Canadian Bishop was involved in the memorialization, Grassett's cognitive dissonance would erupt into a showdown between competing narratives of 1885. By August of 1924 the Bishop had agreed to transfer a twenty-five square-foot plot of land near the Batoche Church to the Canadian government. The contract, signed in September 1924, stipulated that the federal government wished to use the Church land to "commemorate the Batoche Battlefield."[623] This wording, and the differences between how the two parties interpreted it, would later become a major point of contention for the Church, which would come to believe that the government had not lived up to the letter of the contract.

The first sign of conflict came when the Bishop requested that the plaque contain both English and French texts.[624] Harkin told the Bishop he was sympathetic to a bilingual monument,[625] but privately admitted the HSMBC had not seriously considered a French option:

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[620] Letter from H.F. Grassett to General Otter, November 8, 1923, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, Series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.
[621] Letter from J.B. Harkin to the Secretary, Prince Albert Historical Association, 19 May 1924, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.
[622] Letter from J.B. Harkin to the Right Reverend J.H. Prudhomme, July 5, 1924, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC
[623] Indenture Made the Second Day of September in the year of Our Lord, One Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty-Four, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, volume 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC, 1.
[624] Letter from Joseph H. Prudhomme to J.B. Harkin, August 19, 1924, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.
[625] Letter from J.B. Harkin, Commissioner, to Bishop J.H. Prudhomme, August 30, 1924, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol.979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.

"This will mean an extra tablet as one has already been cast in English only."[626] While Commissioner Harkin was agreeable to a French inscription at Batoche, HSMBC member Judge F.W. Howay was not. In a letter to Harkin dated 8 September 1924, Howay described himself as "utterly opposed to it in the strongest possible way." The Justice's reasons for opposing a French inscription are worth quoting at length:

> I ask you why we should; is it because there were some French half-breeds in the actions, or is it to honour Riel and Dumont's French ancestry? ... if we begin putting these tablets in English and French in this Western country we are going to plant the seeds of a lot of trouble. I know what I am talking about, and I know the feelings of the people here more than the other members of the Board. Personally... I am a great lover of the French but that's a totally different thing from agreeing to tablets in French in a community where probably not one in five hundred can read the language far less speak it. I feel this matter very strongly... and much as I enjoy the work of the Board I am prepared, as I told Dr. Webster last June before the matter came up, to hand in my resignation rather than be a party to placing these tablets in French in a Western Community.[627]

Despite Howay's protestations of love for "the French", his comments revealed a deep-seated antipathy towards Francophones, particularly in Western Canada. They also displayed a deep ignorance, with the Judge stating that "some" of the Métis under Riel and Dumont were Francophone, when in reality the vast majority were. The Justice's belief that he could better understand the views of the west were particularly interesting when one considers that Howay lived in New Westminster, British Columbia, over 1,500 kilometres away from the historic site in question.

Howay also used a slippery slope argument, noting that if tablets were in French and English, what was to stop groups from demanding tablets in "Swedish, Norwegian and Gaelic"? He argued that such linguistic groups "have just as much right to recognition outside the Province of Quebec of their own language as have the French."[628] In Howay's view, the French outside of Quebec did not need to be acknowledged any more than any other ethnic minority – which is to say they did not need to be acknowledged at all.

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[626] Letter from J.B. Harkin, Commissioner, to His Honor Judge F.W. Howay, August 30th 1924, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.
[627] Letter from F.W. Howay to J.B. Harkin, Sept 8, 1924, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC, 1-2.
[628] Ibid, 1.

Howay's views were somewhat extreme, even on the Board - Commissioner Harkin responded to his threatened resignation by reminding Howay that the board had agreed that French inscriptions would be considered "wherever there had been a French occupation or French troops has been engaged in any particular conflict," and further noted "that each individual case should be dealt with on its merits."[629] For now, Parks would erect a cairn with the English-only inscription, but a French translation would be considered at the next Board meeting. Harkin asked Howay to keep an open mind on the subject.[630]

Unfortunately for Judge Howay and the HSMBC, it was not only Harkin who disagreed with his Anglo-centric views on French Canadians. In very short order, Batoche was to become an albatross around the Board's collective neck. Controversy broke out at the official unveiling ceremony, held on 10 July 1925, more than forty years after the end of the battle. The date had been selected specifically so a Francophone group called Liaison Française could attend the ceremony. Liaison was travelling across the country by train, trying to promote greater understanding between French and English Canada. This was one situation, however, where understanding was not promoted; 125 members of Liaison refused to attend the ceremony. The Regina *Leader Post* claimed that Liaison characterized the tablet inscription as a "breach of faith and an insult to the Metis."[631]

The ceremony itself would become a fiasco. The Catholic Church had been invited to send a representative to speak at the unveiling and selected Father J.H. Brodeur, vicar-general and acting head of the of the diocese of Prince Albert and Saskatoon. Brodeur used the opportunity to attack the HSMBC, declaring that it had committed a breach of the contract signed with the Church:

> It is here, on this very spot where was shed the blood of the insurgents, as well as that of the soldiers of this country, that stands the monument which, according to the stipulations of a bilingual contract, was to commemorate the "Battlefield of Batoche", and nothing else. We depend on the loyalty of the signers of this

[629] Letter from J.B. Harkin, Commissioner, to his Honour Judge F.W. Howay, 2nd October, 1924, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 1, LAC.
[630] Ibid.
[631] "Inscription on Cairn is Objected To," in the *Regina Leader-Post*, July 11, 1925, 1.

> contract for its observance and the due consideration of legitimate susceptibilities.[632]

Brodeur's complaint was twofold. First, he felt the lack of French inscription violated the spirit of the contract; he noted Parks had promised the Bishop a French inscription not once, but twice. Second, he objected to the use of the word "rebels" in the English script. While Brodeur himself called the Métis insurgents and highlighted that the Church had not supported the rebellion, he still felt it offended the "legitimate susceptibilities" of the Métis people in the West.[633] He stated that the inscription commemorated "not the battle of Batoche [as per the contract with the Bishop] but the memory of the rebellion." Brodeur demanded that the tablet on the cairn be removed and replaced by one "in keeping with the agreement."[634] It was also felt that the plaque, placed so close to Batoche church, implied that the clergy has supported the uprising. McCullough notes in his article about commemoration and 1885 that Brodeur's complaints serve "as a useful reminder that the positions of the clergy and the Metis were not identical, although the Board treated the clergy as intermediaries for the Metis."[635]

It would not be long before the Métis would also make their opposition known at least somewhat separately from the Catholic Church - the Prince Albert French-language paper Le Patriote recorded that there had been dissent in the Saskatchewan French and Métis communities even before the unveiling ceremony. The author described the Métis as being "wounded in their national pride, by this erection on their own land of a monument to the soldiers who had fought against their ancestors - called rebels in the inscription". The paper further noted that some Métis had wanted to blow up the monument.[636] By February of 1926, the Union Nationale in Manitoba was lobbying to have the Batoche memorial changed. Union General President Samuel A. Nault wrote to Francophone HSMBC member Aegidius Fauteux of Montreal seeking help in this regard, and remarked that Bishop Prudhomme was seeking interviews with Ministers

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[632] Translated extract from *La Liberté*, July 22, 1925, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol, 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[633] Howard Angus Kennedy, "Trouble over the Memorial Erected in Batoche Churchyard," in the *Calgary Herald*, Saturday, August 22, 1925, p. 1.
[634] "Inscription is Objected To," *Leader-Post*, July 11, 1925, 1.
[635] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance," 426.
[636] Extract from *Le Patriote*, translated by J.T., in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.

in Ottawa in order to "have the situation remedied."[637] Fateux, like the Francophone Board members before him, had resigned from the Board and could only forward Nault's letter on to Harkin.[638]

English-Canadian papers picked up on the controversy, and were not completely unsympathetic to the concerns of the Métis. Howard Angus Kennedy, who had served as a press correspondent during the 1885 conflict, wrote an article entitled "The War-Dance of Batoche" that was published in the Toronto *Globe*, the *Mail and Empire*, the Calgary *Herald*, and even in Ottawa's French-language paper Le Droit.[639] In it, Kennedy argued for a "…common-sense agreement quite satisfactory to the peace-loving mass of our citizens, both French and English speaking." And the common-sense solution, in Kennedy's opinion, was to consider the feelings of the Métis:

> It is neither considerate nor just – and certainly no one can even imagine it to be necessary – that every time they go to church they should be confronted by an epithet they have been taught to regard as offensive – by a constant reminder that forty years ago they committed what their Church denounces as the crime of rebellion.[640]

Kennedy ultimately felt that the HSMBC should accede to the demands for a bilingual plaque and the removal of the word "rebels." Kennedy was extremely critical of the HSMBC, and singled out Judge Howay for not understanding the concerns of prairie residents. He described Howay as "one of the ablest and most useful men on the board", but then went on to note that the Justice "has never pretended to have that special knowledge of the prairie provinces which was required".[641]

> I wish it could honestly be said that this care has been taken in preparing all the other memorial tablets lately set up in the West, but unfortunately Batoche is by

[637] Letter from S.A. Nault, General President of l'Union Nationale Metisse of Manitoba to A. Fateux, Esq., February 25, 1926, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[638] Letter from Aegidius Fauteux to J.B. Harkin, March 2, 1926, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, volume 979, file BA2, part 2, NAC. For the story of how French-Canadian points of view were largely absent from the HSMBC in the 1920s, see C.J. Taylor, "Some Early Problems of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada," 12-13, and also C.J. Taylor, *Negotiation the Past*, 85-86.
[639] "Protestation qui fait son chemin" *Le Droit*, 29 August 1925.
[640] H.A. Kennedy, "The War-Dance of Batoche: An Offending Inscription – Bury the Hatchet!" *The Toronto Globe*, August 22, 1925, 4.
[641] Ibid.

> no means the worst. The Historic Sites Board is doing magnificent work, but it includes no representatives of any part of the West except British Columbia.[642]

While the Batoche plaque attracted the most media attention, the other plaques also courted controversy. Both McCullough and Taylor note that the Cut Knife plaque – which was erected on the Poundmaker reserve where First Nations veterans of the battle were still living – became a source of discontent. Complaints were forwarded to Ottawa, along with a request that a new plaque should be created with the falsehoods omitted. The plaque was eventually defaced with the words "All lies."[643]

In hindsight, it is easy to see why the 1885 plaques would cause so much protest from First Nations and Métis communities. Taylor identifies the weakness of Howay's representation east of British Columbia as the culprit and notes that as a result, sites in the Prairies "were likely to be interpreted from perspectives alien to regional historical traditions."[644] For the HSMBC, the starting point for interpreting 1885 was the volunteer's narrative. This had not been a problem before 1924. With few exceptions, all prior monuments to 1885 that propagated the volunteers' narrative had been located in white settler communities. Those that were not in white settler communities were usually simple grave stones, like that of gunner Phillips at Batoche or the graves of the massacre victims at Frog Lake; there was little controversy in marking where the dead lay. With the 1924 plaques, however, the HSMBC had attempted to impose English-Canadian collective memory in the heart of communities that had maintained a very different view of the past. In towns and cities such as Winnipeg, Toronto and Port Hope, the narrative of the heroic volunteers had found fertile ground in which to grow and flourish. Conversely, on the battlefields of Batoche and Cut Knife, the story of the volunteers could not take root – for their narrative, this was barren soil.

Perhaps more surprising was the fact that not all English Canadians saw the two memory communities as mutually exclusive. McCullough notes that Kennedy's writing suggest at least some were willing to accommodate a more nuanced view of the conflict – one that did not paint

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[642] Ibid.
[643] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance," 428. See also C.J. Taylor, Some Early Problems of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada," 16.
[644] Taylor, *Negotiating the Past*, 89.

Indigenous people as arch villains, but also did not detract from the heroism of Canada's volunteers:

> Kennedy's attack on the plaques revealed that there was a more nuanced interpretation of the rebellion current in English Canada and that the issue was far more complex than the short, nationalist texts favoured by the board were capable of dealing with.[645]

Kennedy was not alone. Taylor notes that public opinion in Saskatchewan was sympathetic to the Métis, and that the University of Saskatchewan supported the creation of a French version of the plaque.[646] While some English Canadians were able to embrace a nuanced interpretation, the Board experienced great difficulty reconciling these two solitudes, particularly with the Batoche plaque. It was not that the board was completely inflexible. J.H. Coyne, who had seconded the motion to construct the Batoche monument, grudgingly offered to compromise:

> I adhere to the view I held and, I think, expressed at the meeting of the Board, that the inscription should be in French as well as English and I cannot understand, why there should be any objection to the word "rebels", the Metis having been without question in arms against the government, which is all that is meant by the word. If, however, the people of the district, who appear to be to a considerable extent of Metis descent, and French speech, would prefer the word Metis, I would be willing to acquiesse [sic].[647]

Not surprisingly, Howay was not as accommodating, and continued to dismiss Father Brodeur's objections to the word "rebels." In a September 1925 letter to Harkin, he wrote: "He [Brodeur] seems to think the word not in good taste: wants it softened down while admitting that they were "rebels". I do not quite appreciate this."[648] The board – particularly the Ontario members – were also resistant to changing the Cut Knife plaque.[649] Throughout these debates, there is no evidence that at any point the Board seriously considered consulting directly with First Nations or Métis communities about the wording. Instead, it continued to communicate with the Church, though it proved difficult to negotiate a compromise.

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[645] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance," 431.
[646] Taylor, "Some Early Problems of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada," 20.
[647] Letter from J.H. Coyne to J.B. Harkin, August 22, 1925, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[648] Letter from F.W. Howay to J.B. Harkin, September 18, 1925, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84 series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC, 1.
[649] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance," 429.

Harkin himself was in communication with Bishop Prudhomme, still professing that a French inscription would be forthcoming. For his part, the Bishop replied with a very clear statement of what the Church wanted to see: "Rayer de l'incription anglaise les mots "rebellion" et "rebels" et modifier toute redaction de nature a en insinuer le sens."[650] Prudhomme was afraid that those who saw the inscription would presume the Church had supported the Métis in 1885, when the opposite was true. He also maintained that the term shamed the Métis. Prudhomme claimed that the present inscription could only hurt the cause of national unity. Perhaps more interestingly was the Bishop's use of Confederation itself to justify his request: "en vertu du pacte de 1867, j'ai le droit d'exiger une inscription bilingue."[651] As Prudhomme saw things, 1867 was an agreement between French and English which required that French Canadians be acknowledged not just in Quebec, but wherever they had established communities in Canada.

Harkin and the HSMBC did not necessarily see Confederation in the same light. In reply to the Bishop's missive, the Commissioner requested further clarification, remarking "I cannot convince myself that it can be interpreted in the manner you mention in your letter." Harkin also requested suggestions for new wording on the inscriptions.[652] Prudhomme somewhat wearily explained that he could sum up everything he wanted in two sentences: "a) une plaque bilingue, b) effacer les mots "rebelles".[653] The Bishop ominously stated that he wanted a peaceful solution, but he withheld the right to protest if an agreement could not be reached, noting "Je ne veux pas que l'histoire reproche plus tard a l'authorite religieuse un acte de faiblesse."[654] Now the Bishop was not just thinking about how people remembered the past, but how posterity would recall his defence of it.

If the Bishop was opposed to the word "rebels," the members of the HMSBC remained equally committed to it. At the May 1926 meeting of the six-member board, Judge Howay made the following motion, which was then carried:

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[650] Letter from Joseph H. Prudhomme to J.B. Harkin, March 26, 1926, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84 series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC, 1.
[651] Ibid.
[652] Letter from J.B. Harkin to His Grace Bishop J.H. Prudhomme, 30 April 1926, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[653] Letter from Joseph H. Prudhomme to J.B. Harkin, May 6, 1926, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC, 1.
[654] Ibid, 2.

> That having regard to historical accuracy this Board is unable to advise any change in the English inscription on the Batoche Memorial, and that the Board advises that a tablet with a translation thereof into the French language be attached to the cairn.[655]

The board still maintained that the disagreement was about historical accuracy, rather than conflicting interpretations of the past. Harkin was not at all pleased by the result. In a memorandum the Commissioner noted that at the meeting, "I made it clear to the members present that it might be necessary to take other action than that recommended by the Board, if deemed expedient from a Departmental standpoint."[656] In a July letter to Bishop Prudhomme, the Commissioner claimed he was going to bring the Bishop's two requests to the board for consideration and promised to communicate again at a later date. There was no mention that the suggestions had already been presented to the Board and that one had been rejected.[657]

The stalling continued. In comparison, the Board dealt with the complaint of one W.J. Robinson of Winnipeg rather quickly. His concern was that individuals at the Batoche plaque unveiling had disrespected the Union Jack. Robinson wrote Harkin on 6 August 1926, and by November Harkin had been able to have history professor A.S. Morton investigate the incident and offer a conclusive reply that no disrespect had been meant.[658] Board members likely wished that all the issues at Batoche could have been resolved so easily.

Three more years passed before the situation changed at all. The HSMBC finally agreed to alter the wording of the English inscription, but at this point, a French inscription had still not been made.[659] Even more remarkably, Parks had not received a report as to the condition of the monument since the unveiling in 1925.[660] Then, in November of 1929, the RCMP discovered that just like the plaque at Cut Knife, the Batoche monument had actually been defaced. A number of letters had been hammered off the inscription. The police report

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[655] Extract from the HSMBC Meeting, May 1926, Joseph H. Prudhomme to J.B. Harkin, March 26, 1926, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[656] Memorandum to Mr. Cory, June 30, 1926, Joseph H. Prudhomme to J.B. Harkin, March 26, 1926, in Batoche National Historic Site , RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC, 2.
[657] Letter from J.B. Harkin to His Grace Bishop J.H. Prudhomme, 12 July 1926. Joseph H. Prudhomme to J.B. Harkin, March 26, 1926, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[658] Letter to W.J. Robinson, Esq. from J.B. Harkin, November 11, 1926, Joseph H. Prudhomme to J.B. Harkin, March 26, 1926, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[659] Letter from J.B. Harkin to H.A. Kennedy, 23 May 1929, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[660] Memorandum to J.B. Harkin, Esq., 31 October 1929, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.

noted that "This did not appear to be the work of children and that it was the work of some one in spite towards the erection of same".[661]

Walter Murray, President of the University of Saskatchewan, was quite concerned with the negative publicity the defacement might generate. On 25 November 1929, in a letter marked "Private and Confidential", Murray explained that no more controversy was needed:

> You know the history of this monument. Around it a succession of blunders have clustered from the very beginning. The intention of placing the monument was excellent and had the inscription been suitable there never would have been any difficulty.... [I] believe that no useful purpose can be served by stirring up the passions that have been slumbering for forty years, and if no fresh fuel is poured upon the fires the thing will be forgotten and everybody will laugh at the series of blunders. If the police start prosecution it will be given great publicity and the facts will be distorted and the French from one end of Canada to the other will feel that they are being persecuted. The whole matter is so trivial and it seems unworthy for reasonable men to pay any attention to it.[662]

For such a "trivial" matter - a few words on a copper plate - much ink had been spilled. Murray's comment that the passions had been slumbering for forty years was also untrue. The Métis and First Nations had, in their own communities, maintained a shared memory of the events of 1885 and had seen the plaques as a provocation. In fact, it is likely that the inaction on the part of the Parks Branch was the immediate cause of the defacement. A homestead inspector's report on the damaged inscription cited the priest at Batoche as follows: "some half-breeds in the vicinity [were] saying that the government had promised to change the tablet but had not done so, so that they were going to do it themselves."[663] Regardless of the how and why, it seems that the Dominion government agreed with Murray - no more fuel should be added to the fire. On 4 December 1929 instruction came from Sgt T.C. Goldsmith to take no further action to capture the perpetrators. Goldsmith noted this was a direct result of Murray's letter.[664]

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[661] Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Memorial Monument, Batoche Sask, Willful Damage to inscription on: November 19, 1929, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84 series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[662] Letter from Walter Murray, President of the University of Saskatchewan, to Mr. MacPherson, November 25, 1929, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84 series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[663] Homestead Inspector's Report: Supplementary Form, Received March 21, 1930, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[664] Royal Canadian Mounter Police, Memorial Monument. Batoche. Sask., Willful Damage to inscription on: December 4. 1929, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84 series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.

Parks, as well as the HSMBC, simply wanted the issue of the plaques to go away. In a January 1930 memorandum to R.A. Gibson, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Interior, it was explained why the monument was currently not subject to standard annual inspections: "in view of the controversy, it was thought better to allow the matter to stand."[665] A May 1930 meeting of the HSMBC continued what was now becoming a tradition of inaction. The minutes relating to Batoche simply read as follows: "The existing condition of the tablet was reported for the information of the Board. No action recommended."[666]

Despite this inaction, the volunteers still had many champions who continued to push for further recognition at Batoche. Local English-Canadian history enthusiasts and tourism boosters still argued the government should take the initiative. H.E. Ross of the Imperial Bank in Prince Albert commented on the unkempt condition of the actual battlefield, inquiring if something could be done to maintain and preserve the site so it would be attractive to visitors. It was no longer enough, as it seemed to be for William Raymond in 1907, that Batoche be picturesque:

> I may say there are hundreds of people visit this historic site every week during the summer, and to emphasize this I may say that there were forty people in the party I was with, and while there, another party of seven cars came for the same purpose... this spot should be kept in decent appearance to commemorate the stirring events of 1885, and I would ask you to hand this letter to the proper authorities, if same does not pertain to your department.[667]

Howay, still the Board's Western representative, wrote to Commissioner Harkin about Ross's letter in July 1930. The Justice concluded that "Our experience in that place [Batoche] has not been encouraging and does not urge one to advise any outlay for historical purposes.... My own feeling is to let Batoche "fry in its own grease" until the people awake."[668] It was not clear what Howay meant by "the people." What was clear was that if the Métis and the French wouldn't accept the Board's preferred narrative of 1885, then Howay felt the government should do nothing with the site. The next letters came from Albert Caron, a farmer at Batoche whose farmland included much of the battle site. Caron offered to maintain the battle sites in exchange

[665] Memorandum: Mr. Gibson, 3rd January, 1930, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[666] Extract from the Minutes at Historic Sites and Monuments Board Meeting, May 17, 1930, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.
[667] Letter from H.E. Ross to the Secretary, Dept. Militia Defence, June 11th, 1930, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC, 1.
[668] Letter to J.B. Harkin from F.W. Howay, July 5, 1930, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2, LAC.

for some sort of financial remuneration. He would petition the government several times over the course of the 1930s, requesting anything from $50 to $100 for his services. Caron never received a positive reply from Parks or the HSMBC.[669]

The Board continued to hold off taking any action at Batoche. In 1931 it was moved that "further consideration of the site stand until the next year."[670] This is not to say there was no change – in 1931 the Board agreed to a new text that replaced the words "Indians rebels" with "Hostile Indians." The new text also removed claims that the Canadian soldiers had achieved their objectives in the battle.[671] All such concessions seemed to be grudging ones, however, and were far and few between. At a May 1932 meeting, the HSMBC agreed to defer the question of supplying a French inscription at Batoche for "further consideration."[672] Once again in 1933, all action on Batoche was deferred.[673] Judge Howay had moved all three Batoche motions. Batoche was being left to "fry in its own grease."

It is likely, of course, that there were factors other than Howay's opposition influencing the board's decision to ignore Batoche and propose only minor changes to Cut Knife – the Depression of the 1930s was certainly one issue. McCullough notes that the Depression delayed proposed changes on the 1885 plaque at Battleford – and Batoche was likely in the same boat.[674] It has also been demonstrated that neither Parks nor the HSMBC wanted to risk a second round of controversy. Even once all this is taken into account, there is still a case to be made that Howay, and likely other members of the Board, were committed to a particular view of the past – the volunteer narrative that had been dominant in most of English Canada since 1885. They were reluctant to accommodate other perspectives and largely unwilling to consult the communities upon whose land they had placed the monuments.

**"When old soldiers get together": reunions and remembering in the 1920s and 30s**

[669] Multiple letters from Albert Caron to "Dear Sirs", 1930, 1931, 1939, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 2 and part 3, LAC.
[670] Extract of Minutes at Historic Sites and Monuments Board Meeting, May 29, 1931, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 3, LAC.
[671] McCullough, 429.
[672] Extract of Minutes at Historic Sites and Monuments Board Meeting, May 31, 1932, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 3, LAC.
[673] Extract of Minutes at Historic Sites and Monuments Board Meeting, May 26, 1933, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 3, LAC.
[674] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance," 428.

The board was not alone in its support of the volunteer narrative. Their vision of the past was still very popular in English Canada in the 1920s and 1930s, and the volunteers themselves continued to champion it amongst themselves and to the wider public. In this endeavour they continued to have the support of English-Canadian elites. The rebellion featured extensively in the *Manitoba Free Press* in 1921, in anticipation of a memorial parade that would see the volunteers of 1885 march as heroes alongside soldiers from the Fenian Raids, the Boer War and the First World War.[675] In 1925 – the same year the controversy over the plaques struck – the *Evening Telegram* in Toronto ran a story with a headline that encapsulated the volunteer narrative most succinctly: " "Call to Arms Thrilled City 'Twas 40 years Ago This Day: Expeditionary Force Suffered Hardships, Proved Heroism, Saved Canada."[676] The year 1925 also saw the Saskatoon Industrial Exhibition put out a call in the local paper looking for veterans of the 1885 conflict to attend the festivities. The goal was not simply to have the veterans around; Field Marshal Earl Haig, commander of the British Expeditionary Force during the First World War, was attending and the organizers were "…anxious to present to him as many of the veterans of the '85 Rebellion as possible."[677] Letters sent to veterans promised free tickets and that "All the courtesies of the Exhibition will be extended to you complimentary":

> In addition to this I am informed by the officers of the Army and Navy Veterans Association that they will entertain you with banquets, smokers and other events; also that they have arranged for billeting if necessary. This invitation is sent to you as a very slight acknowledgement of our Board's appreciation of your efforts in our behalf forty years ago.[678]

The organizers received numerous responses from those interested in attending, from as far away as British Columbia.[679] Interestingly, Canadian militia veterans were not the only veterans to respond to the call. In March of 1925, the Exhibition organizers also received a letter in French from Batoche, Saskatchewan. The missive, penned by one Barthélémi Pilon, was short and to the point : "On voit sur le papier Saskatoon Star qu'on vaudra avoir des noms des gars

[675] "Men of Many battles in Memorial Parade" in *Manitoba Free Press, June 4, 1921.*
[676] ""Call to Arms" Thrilled City 'Twas 40 Years Ago This Day," *Toronto Evening Telegram,* N.D., in M314-24 Jessie De Gear fonds, Glenbow Archives.
[677] Letter to Mr. Wm. Drain, from Secretary and Manager, Saskatchewan Industrial Exhibition, July 8, 1925, Innes Papers, File III a 24, Saskatoon Exhibition 1925, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[678] Ibid.
[679] Letter from John McIntosh to Mr. Sid Johns, Mgr Exhibition Board, April 13, 1925, Innes Papers, File III a 24, Saskatoon Exhibition 1925, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

qu'on eu part à la rébellion 1885 – les voici quelques qui vive."[680] This statement was followed by a list of eleven names, including Pilon himself, along with their place of residence. Seven of the eleven were listed as residing at Batoche. One cannot help but wonder if Pilon's decision to write and declare his status as a veteran was in any way connected to the erection of the Batoche cairn and plaque the year before. It is possible that Pilon's letter declaring himself and his compatriots veterans of 1885 was a defiant act, meant to indicate that at least some Métis did not accept the volunteer narrative. It is also possible Pilon's letter was in earnest, and that the Métis around Batoche truly thought that an English-Canadian celebration of the volunteers would make space for them and their narrative. There is no record of what reply, if any, the Exhibition organizers made to Pilon.

The volunteers, of course, did not need industrial exhibitions to help them get organized. Volunteers continued to organize reunions were often supported by local elites. On 23 April 1925, the Battleford Column Association held a grand banquet in honour of the 40th anniversary of the conflict. The patron of the event was none other than the former commander of the Column itself, General Sir William D. Otter.[681] A reunion dinner was also held that year in Winnipeg, at the Marlborough Hotel. An image of the event from the Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum shows a well-attended banquet, with some men wearing both medals and a uniform. Two flags are visible in the background of the photo; one reads "1866-70 Fenian Raids" while on the other can be seen "1885 North-West."[682] While the label on the photo claims the dinner was an 1885 reunion, it appears veterans of the Fenian conflicts were also in attendance. Veterans of 1885 were clearly content to celebrate alongside fellow soldiers.

[680] Letter from Barthélémi Pilon, to Saskatchewan Industrial Exhibition, March 25, 1925, Innes Papers, File III a 24, Saskatoon Exhibition 1925, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[681] "1885-1925 Fortieth Anniversary of Relief Battleford, Sask. By the Battleford Column, Under Col – now Maj. Gen Sir W.D. Otter, The Canadian Military Institute, Toronto, Thursday, April 23rd, 1925," A113 Innes Papers VIII, Clippings, 42, Riel Rebellion, 1885, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan..
[682] "North-West Field Force 1885 Re-UNION BANQUET, Marlborough Hotel, Winnipeg, Saturday May 23rd, 1925," photo from Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.


Figure 27: North-West Field Force 1885 Re-UNION BANQUET. Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.

The year 1933 marked half a century since the creation of the 90th Rifles – now the Royal Winnipeg Rifles – and the 1885 conflict featured prominently in the commemorations. The Rifles organized a grand pageant in their home city, with soldiers wearing uniforms from the regiment's past.[683] A pamphlet commemorating the anniversary proudly listed Fish Creek and Batoche as the Rifle's first battle honours.[684] The opening paragraph of the pamphlet made clear the continuing importance of 1885 in the regiment's mythology:

> Little Black Devils – named by the enemy in battle! It was a baptism well deserved, a name proudly cherished through the years, and the foundation of a tradition that has carried the Regiment to fame in the arena of world conflict.[685]

The pamphlet gave a historical sketch of the Rifles' career, and showed that for the regiment, the memories of 1885 remained largely unchanged. The Métis were still firmly in the wrong, though they were worthy foes; the pamphlet described Riel as an "egomaniac" and the events at Duck Lake as perpetrated by the Métis and their leader.[686] The text, like many that had come before it, also highlighted the sacrifices of the volunteers:

> Pork, beans and hard tack were the staple bill-of-fare for food, as well as the theme for song. The utmost credit must be given the men of that first campaign,

[683] Brian A. Reid, *Named by the Enemy*, 130.
[684] *The Winnipeg Rifles Fiftieth Anniversary, 1883-1933*, in North West Field Force, Box 4, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[685] Ibid.
[686] Ibid, 18.

> recruited as they were from the stores and offices, who, cheerfully and without complaint, made forced marches despite those adverse conditions of trail, rations and weather.[687]

The *Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, meanwhile, dedicated an entire page to the regiment's fifty-year history. It did not present 1885 in quite as jingoistic prose as the Rifles' own pamphlet, stating that "As modern campaigns, go, the Rebellion was a sort of glorified summer picnic." Nonetheless, the *Tribune* still conceded that the veterans had faced hardships, remarking: "But that "Our tents in a row we pitched in the snow" old regimental song contains much more of grim realism than of poetry, survivors will say feelingly today."[688] The *Winnipeg Free Press*, meanwhile, in its own feature, declared that the Métis had had a just cause, but still praised the work of the Rifles in marching west to defend the nation. [689] While the *Free Press* and the *Tribune* both pointed out some of the flaws in the traditional narrative of 1885, they still gave the conflict pride of place in the regiment's history.

While the Rifles' 1933 anniversary was notable, the reunions of 1935 – marking fifty years since 1885 – were very consequential indeed, and focused exclusively on the volunteers who had marched west half a century ago. Reunions were held in a number of cities, including Toronto, Montreal and Winnipeg. In Toronto, the press began to commemorate the anniversary well before any reunion had taken place, publishing a brief editorial in March to mark the anniversary of the Battle of Duck Lake. The editorial's account of the rebellion would not have sounded out of place in an English-Canadian newspaper in 1885 - Riel had "incited" the Métis and the First Nations, while the volunteers had "suffered many privations" and "behaved with the utmost courage and determination."[690] The editors celebrated the upcoming reunion of Canada's 1885 veterans, and encouraged all Canadians to cheer them on:

> It is fitting that they should come together as old soldiers of their country and chat over military experiences of their earlier manhood. Wherever these veterans

[687] Ibid, 19.
[688] "Fiftieth Birthday of the Winnipeg Rifles – "Little Black Devils" of Great War Fame," *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, August 26, 1933, in Hougham, R.H. Correspondence re manuscript, N.W. Rebellion, 1885," part of Robert H. Hougham fonds, M539, File 29, Glenbow Archives.
[689] Ninetieth Rifles to Mark Golden Jubilee: Winnipeg's Historic Military Unit Will Stage Huge Reunion," *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 26, 1933, 4.
[690] "The Veterans of 1885," *The Toronto Globe*, 19 March 1935, 4.

> foregather during the present year, younger Canadians, familiar with war in its more terrible guise, will wish them a few happy hours together.[691]

In 1935, veterans were determined to spend more than just a few hours together. In Toronto, there were actually at least two volunteer reunions that year. The veterans of the Battleford Column, still organized into their own independent association, held a gathering in May. The *Globe* playfully reported on an old mystery solved: a pudding had been stolen from Major T.A.E. World's tent fifty years before, and no culprit had ever been found. At the reunion, the thieves were identified as two of his fellow veterans – in the interim one had become a Judge and the other a crown attorney. In this case, the *Globe* took a philosophical approach to crime and punishment: "When old soldiers get together – especially after half a century – much is forgiven."[692]

The second Toronto reunion was a much wider affair, intended for all veterans. Held from 26 to 29 July, it saw some old soldiers travel 1,600 miles to attend. It included a visit to Centre Island, where the veterans sat in a circle and shared stories of the expedition. The closing ceremony was held at the volunteers' monument in Queen's Park, where a plaque was unveiled commemorating the 1935 gathering. The plaque itself concluded with the words "They did not forget."[693] Quite the opposite – the veterans were very determined to remember, and to enjoy their memories. One newspaper headline even read "VETERANS rejuvenated by REUNION," and described how the boys declared: "We'll come again ten years from now because this day has made us five years younger."[694]

Memory was a fountain of youth for the veterans – and as such, it was a prize worth defending. Up until that time, the Canadian militia veterans had enjoyed a largely favourable relationship between their private recollections of the past and collective memory in English-Canadian society. They did not want their memories challenged, even if their version of events did not always line up with the facts. In August of 1935, Ottawa was finally planning to implement the small changes to the Cut Knife Hill plaque that had been erected in 1925. This did not sit well with the veterans. At a meeting on Centre Island in Toronto, the veterans listened

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[691] Ibid.
[692] "Theft Also "Will Out," *The Toronto Globe*, May 6, 1935, 4.
[693] "Veterans of 1885 Conclude their Three-Day Reunion," *The Toronto Globe*, July 29, 1935, 9.
[694] "VETERANS rejuvenated by REUNION: Exploits of '85 Recalled," *The Globe*, July 30, 1935, 10.

as Bishop G.E. Lloyd of Saskatchewan called the proposed new tablet a "defeatist monstrosity." Then, the veterans publicly declared their opposition to the new tablet. They protested the new tablet claiming it was "…historically untrue and a slander upon Canadian soldiers."[695]

Still, not all Canadians were willing to let the veterans' view of the past go completely unchallenged. Among the photos that the *Globe* had published of the July reunion had been one of veteran A.E. Price proudly displaying a small bell. The paper stated that Price had seized the bell at Batoche and explained that it has been used "…by the rebels in their combined school and Church."[696] At least one Toronto resident took umbrage with Price's bell, and wrote a letter to the editor in protest. The author, who signed the letter as "Blyth, Fair-Minded Canuck," began by criticising the *Globe*'s use of the word "rebels." The arguments mirrored those that had been produced by the Bishop Prudhomme and the Métis ten years earlier in 1925:

> I thought the term "rebel," in reference to our Canadian Indians, had long since become obsolete. Can those persons rightfully be called rebels who were bravely defending their homes and possessions from the masterful and only too often unscrupulous whites?"[697]

At this point, however, the similarities between Blyth and Bishop Prudhomme came to an end. The writer noted there was a cross on the bell, and surmised that it had belonged to missionaries, who were described as "a thousand times more courageous than any worldly warring soldier." For Blyth, this is what made Price's crime truly despicable – he had stolen from Christians. The writer urged that the bell be returned to whatever missionaries were now at Batoche.[698] The letter was a rare condemnation of the looting that had happened during the 1885 campaign.

This one voice of opposition did not mean that the volunteers had lost the support of political and commercial elites. Reunions in other Canadian cities were also great successes, supported by high society. Montreal played host to a smaller reunion on 12 May 1935, the anniversary of the Battle of Batoche. Forty veterans met to share stories of the campaign and sing old songs together. A speech and song was performed by the Honourable Campbell Lane, a

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[695] "Veterans Demand Retention of Tablet: Suggested Memorial at Lookout Hill Scored by 1885 Survivors," *The Toronto Globe*, August 6, 1935, 16.
[696] "Veterans of 1885 Conclude their Three-Day Reunion," 9.
[697] "Echoes of 1885," *The Toronto Globe*, August 10, 1935, 4.
[698] Ibid.

retired judge, who gained "…the hearts of the men with one of his old camp fire favourites."[699] London, Ontario, also saw a reunion of the city's own unit of 1885 veterans – the 7th Fusiliers – although the only known evidence is a photo taken of the event and labelled as such.[700]

Winnipeg's 1935 reunion, like Toronto's, was a three-day affair, organized by the North West Field Force Company of the Army and Navy Veterans in Canada (Winnipeg Unit). The advertised programme was extensive. Festivities began with a banquet at the Hudson's Bay Company Store on 31 May. The next day saw a luncheon hosted by Winnipeg City Council and an evening "smoke talk" where veterans could share their stories. Finally, on 2 June, the veterans joined Winnipeg's active military regiments for the annual Decoration Day parade.[701]

Institutional support came from many levels. Lieutenant-Governor W.J. Tupper, himself a veteran of 1885, was a member of the planning committee. Tupper's letter of welcome highlighted a noble past that all should be proud of:

> I feel that our thoughts will go back to those stirring days, when, as young men, we set forth at the call of duty to assist our country's cause and I feel that our loyalty and love of country is still the same.[702]

Support also came from the city. In May 1935, council passed a motion in support of tendering a luncheon to the veterans and their spouses in Assiniboine Park, at a cost of $162.40.[703] Approximately 150 individuals, including the lieutenant governor and members of City Council, attended the luncheon. The Friday night banquet had also seen politicians in attendance, including at least one member of the provincial legislature.[704] Support was not only political; the veterans also had financial backing. The reunion's pamphlet was full of advertisements from local and national businesses such as Canada Packers, Manitoba Commercial College, E.S. Feldsted Jewellers, and the Hudson's Bay Company. Even a private individual purchased

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[699] "Riel Revolt Recalled by 40 Veterans," in *Fifty Years After: 1885-1935*, In Box 5, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[700] "Taken on 50th Anniversary of leaving for the N.W. Rebellion, in MG29 E10, in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, LAC.
[701] "Programme," in *Fifty Years After: 1885-1935*, in Box 5, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[702] Ibid.
[703] Motion 438, May 7, 1935, Minutes of Council 1935, 243, City of Winnipeg Archives. See also letter from Superintendent Champion to G.F. Bentley, City Clerk, 20 June 1935, in Committee on Legislation and Reception, City of Winnipeg Archives.
[704] "More about '85 Veterans (continued from Page One)," *Winnipeg Free Press*, n.d., p. 5

advertising in the pamphlet. It was Sam Carson of 288 Tache Avenue in St. Boniface, who simply wrote: "Just a welcome from an Old Timer to the Boys of 1885."[705]

The story the pamphlet told was not very different from the story in the Royal Winnipeg Rifles' 1933 pamphlet: Riel had incited the Métis and First Nations into rebellion. The author stressed that it was only the swift and brave actions of the Canadian militia that had prevented a wider revolt: "The decisive battle at Batoche relieved the situation and showed the red men who were not too deeply involved that nothing could be gained by revolt."[706] Poetry also helped share the collective memory of the veterans, with a poem by veteran H. A. Wilkes of Fernie, B.C., featured in the pamphlet. Called "Dreaming," the title suitably captured the work's wistful tone. Wilkes' stanzas celebrated the patriotic sacrifices of the volunteers, and reminisced about days gone by. Wilkes sadly lamented that for the veterans, there were not many days left ahead:

> Theirs was the blood of that sacrifice / On the prairie wagon ways / That safety gave to the settlers' home / In those early pioneer days; / And few are left of the boys who marched / In the days of '85, / And our heads today are pretty grey / As we near the great divide.[707]

As the ranks began to thin, it appears that Canadian militia veterans became more willing to widen their definition of who was a veteran. The 1935 reunion in Winnipeg explicitly welcomed women to the celebrations. A special Winnipeg Women's Committee called the Ladies Auxiliary entertained the wives of the veterans during the celebrations. The Auxiliary included members of the province's elite, such as Lady Hugh J. Macdonald and Mrs. W.J. Tupper – both wives of 1885 veterans. The Auxiliary page in the 1935 pamphlet honoured one woman as a veteran in her own right; it featured a photo of Mrs. H.C. Howard, and described her as one of the three first war nurses gazetted in Canada. The pamphlet also noted that members of the Northwest Field Force had honoured her on her 72nd birthday.[708] According to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Howard also participated in the roll call of veterans at the reunion's Friday night dinner. The paper described her as the "…only surviving nurse," and noted that both she and Mrs. E. Wasdell, the chair of the women's committee, were presented with bouquets by the

[705] *Fifty Years After: 1885-1935*, In Box 5, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[706] Ibid.
[707] "Dreaming," in *Fifty Years After: 1885-1935*, In Box 5, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[708] "Ladies Auxiliary," in *Fifty Years After: 1885-1935,* In Box 5, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.

veterans.[709] It was not only women who were being included in 1935. The reunion featured at least one guest who would, at one time, have been considered an enemy. Alexandre Riel, the only surviving brother of Louis Riel, also attended the Friday banquet. The *Winnipeg Free Press* said little about his presence, only noting that "He [Riel] added many reminiscences of the campaign."[710]

The Winnipeg reunion was not the only one to include heretofore excluded groups. In that regard, perhaps the most interesting reunion of 1935 was held at Battleford in Saskatchewan, where a very wide cast of characters gathered to mark the anniversary. In addition to militia volunteers, the roster also included old Northwest Mounted Police and local volunteers who had served in the conflict. What was completely different from any other reunion, however, was the attendance of First Nations veterans from Poundmaker's reserve. The *Globe* referred to the gathering as a "semicentennial peace celebration" and reported that the First Nations veterans would be organizing their own reunion at the scene of their old victory:

> The Indians, many of them now ranked old men as compared to the stalwart braves they were when led by Chief Poundmaker, will spend the next two days feasting and dancing at Cut Knife Hill.[711]

The Cut Knife Hill celebrations saw speeches given by both First Nations chiefs and veterans of the Cut Knife fight. According to one record of the speeches, the chiefs were careful with their words – Chief Mosquito, from Stoney Reserve, emphasized "…the good feeling we have towards you [white settlers] compared to the feeling of fifty years ago."[712] Chief Myew, meanwhile, declared: "It is our wish and our prayer to the supreme being that there never should come a time when we shall face the white people in battle again."[713] John Thomas, of Red Pheasant Reserve, was also apologetic, going as far as to say that it was the "ignorance of the Indians" that led them into rebellion. Thomas also attempted to exonerate Poundmaker from any blame for the events of 1885:

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[709] "More about '85 Veterans (continued from Page One)," *Winnipeg Free Press*, n.d., p. 5.
[710] Ibid.
[711] "50 Years of Peace: Poundmaker's Braves Gather With Mounted Veterans at Battleford," *The Toronto Globe*, July 25, 1935.
[712] "Cut Knife Hill, July 26, 1935," A113, Innes Papers, II. Manuscripts, b. Manuscripts, 4. Cut Knife Hill, July 26, 1935, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, 1.
[713] Ibid.

> I heard him as a young boy and I know for a fact that Poundmaker was overridden by the young warriors of his band, that he was forced into the trouble of fifty years ago…. We knew, at the time of the battle here, the strength of the authorities and, as far as we were concerned, if they had not come to their reserves, we would never have come. We could never have touched the white man. If we had not known of his strength we would never have gone on the offensive against him.[714]

In contrast, most of the veterans who spoke simply told their stories without much preamble or philosophizing. All the Indigenous veterans referred to their opponents from 1885 simply as "police", making no distinction between Canadian soldiers and the NWMP. One veteran, Basil Favel Jr., walked up to a Mountie who was attending the event and said "I will touch him now."[715] The record of the speeches does not explain what Basil meant, but perhaps he simply wanted the opportunity to touch the uniform of the force that had been his adversary fifty years before. Another speaker, Sapostokun, recounted the story of how Poundmaker possibly saved the government forces from complete destruction:

> When the troops went back across the creek the Indians ran up on the hill where the wagons, etc., were, ,[sic] and did their best to surround the troops and rub them out of existence, but the efforts of Chief Poundmaker stopped them. "They have come here to fight us and we have fought them; now let them go, he said.[716]

The First Nations veterans also greeted a Canadian forces veteran by the name of Latour. One old Indigenous veteran told him, "You tried your darndest to kill me but I'm still here to-day", while a second declared: "You must have been hiding all that day or I would have got you."[717] These speeches and newspaper accounts are the first evidence of First Nations veterans marking the 1885 conflict in conjunction with Canadian militia veterans. Just as in 1925 at Batoche and Cut Knife Hill, competing narratives were living side by side – although the relationship between the differing memory communities seemed less acrimonious than it had been ten years prior. For the Indigenous people in the region of Battleford, the events of 1885 were still in living memory – and so the volunteers' perceptions of the conflict could not dominate proceedings so thoroughly in Saskatchewan as they did in Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal.

[714] Ibid, 2-3.
[715] Ibid, 4.
[716] Ibid, 7.
[717] Ibid, 8.

The Cut Knife Hill exception aside, the Canadian militia veterans' story dominated most media in English Canada during the conflict's fiftieth anniversary. As noted, the Toronto *Globe* gave extensive coverage to the veterans' reunions of that year. But some papers used the occasion to publish accounts of the conflict itself. The *London Free Press* published an article focusing on the local boys who had marched West – the 7th Fusiliers. Below a headline reading "When They Returned from the Northwest Rebellion 50 Years Ago Today," the paper featured a photo of the unit upon its return from the campaign in 1885.[718] The focus was very narrowly on London and the Fusiliers. Papers in cities west of Ontario, such as the *Winnipeg Free Press*, used the occasion to publish far more extensively about 1885. The paper's 1 June 1935 edition featured a spread of several pages focusing exclusively on the conflict. A whole page was dedicated to the reminisces of George A. Flinn, a war correspondent who had covered the events of 1885. The article featured a large photo of the 90th Rifles and smaller image of Louis Riel.[719] Another article entitled "When Big Bear Took the War Path." took up an entire page.[720] The *Free Press* clearly believed 1885 was still interesting enough to sell papers.

Saskatchewan's print media also used the anniversary was to sell papers, but in an even more explicit fashion. In March, the *Regina Daily Star* launched the first instalment in a daily series about the 1885 conflict. The first feature was four pages long, although the final page was simply promoting future instalments. "DO NOT MISS A Single Instalment of This Thrilling account of the RIEL REBELLION," The advertisement read, "Order Your Copy TODAY".[721] The content of the series tended to stick to the old dichotomy of heroic volunteers and villainous rebels. The author used the world "rebels" when referring to the Métis, and claimed Riel convinced Chief Beardy to join his cause "by promising him the opportunity to plunder". For the Frog Lake Massacre, the author called instigator Wandering Spirit "…as thirsty for blood as a panther" while describing agent Quinn, who was killed by Wandering Spirit, as "…a man of magnificent physique, of great determination and courage".[722]

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[718] "When They Returned From the Northwest Rebellion 50 Years Ago Today," *London Free Press*, 24 July 1935, in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, MG 29 E10, LAC.
[719] "War Correspondent Tells Story of '85 Rebellion" *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 1, 1935, 8.
[720] Phillip H. Godsell, "When Big Bear Took the War Path," *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 1, 1935, 3.
[721] "The Rebellion of 1885," *Regina Daily Star*, March 18, 1935, in Saskatchewan Historical Society, file 153: NW Rebellion, 1885 – 1935-1945, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[722] Ibid.

The *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, meanwhile, published extensive accounts of the conflict in March and April of 1935. The paper thought enough of the series to republish it in a special pamphlet entitled "Reminiscences of the Riel Rebellion of 1885, As Told By Old Timers of Prince Albert and District Who Witnessed Those Stirring Days."[723] The reminiscences were exclusively of those from the winning side of the conflict, although the accounts were not without some nuance, including an old-timer who had been saved from death by Riel, and an article entitled "Indian Uprising Not General in 1885 Rebellion."[724] Once again, it seemed the closer one travelled to the heartland of the conflict, the more likely it was that English Canadians – and English-Canadian media – were willing to engage with the more complex and nuanced narratives of the 1885 conflict.

**"You have the boys of 85 behind you to the finish": Medals as sites of memory**

For Canadian militia veterans, however, memory became more black-and-white as time went by. Memory, and mementoes of memory, also became more precious. As the years went by, many old soldiers wrote to the department of Militia and Defence or to the RCMP requesting replacement 1885 medals. Requests came in from nearly every province and from as far away as California. Most simply explained the circumstances of the loss and requested a replacement, but some would express what the medal meant to them. D.A. Clark, of Orillia, Ontario, was one example. He had served in the Middleton Column with No. 1 Company of the York and Simcoe Regiment. Clark wrote to the Minister of Defence in September 1935 seeking a replacement medal:

> I received my medal for service, but have lost same. I am very anxious to get a duplicate and would take it as a very great favour, if the Department would let me know, the price, if not too great, will send the money by return mail.[725]

Martin James Kenny, of Makena, Manitoba, wrote in August of 1940 to replace the medal he had lost in a fire. "I did lose my dwelling house by Fire", Kenny explained, "And that same was a

[723] *Reminiscences of the Riel Rebellion of 1885, As Told By Old Timers of Prince Albert and District Who Witnessed Those Stirring Days*, Collection No. 1454, File No. VI.8, "Personal Narrations: Prince Albert & District Old Timers, n.d., Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[724] "Riel Saved His Life Half Century Ago," and "Indian Uprising Not General in the Riel Rebellion," in *Reminiscences of the Riel Rebellion of 1885, As Told By Old Timers of Prince Albert and District Who Witnessed Those Stirring Days*, Collection No. 1454, File No. VI.8, "Personal Narrations: Prince Albert & District Old Timers, n.d., Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[725] Letter from D.A. Clark, to Minister of Defence, September 18, 1935, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.

total loss, including practically all the contents, among which was my Medal, received for service in the Riel Rebellion. Which Medal I prized very highly."[726] M. George K. Allen, who wrote from Montreal seeking a replacement in 1940, felt very much the same as Kenny, declaring that "It [the medal] was greatly prized and I hope even at this late date you can replace it with a duplicate."[727] Allen also emphasized his attempt to serve during the First World War; he had been turned down for active service, but ended up doing war work in England in a civilian capacity for the government. Once again, a volunteer was showing that his service of 1885 was only one important chapter in a lifetime of loyalty and service to Canada and the Empire.

George B. Seeds of Los Angeles, California, formerly of the Midland Battalion, wrote in October of 1938 not for a medal, but to replace his ribbon. He explained "I am in my 75th year I want to pass the medal on to my grandson and want the ribbon clean as the last was ruined in a flood we passed through."[728] Meanwhile, Edward E. Fisher, of Lantzville, B.C., wrote in April of 1939 to thank the minister of defence for sending him a replacement medal. After thanking the minister, Fisher added "…if ever the occasion arises you have the boys of 85 behind you to the finish."[729] The volunteers were forever loyal, and many saw their 1885 service as assuring their membership in a national and imperial brotherhood. It is telling that Fisher signed his letter "Fraternally yours".[730]

The extent of this brotherhood is demonstrated in a 1937 letter from one W.H. Cole. Cole wrote from Grimsby, Ontario, asking for an 1885 medal, claiming he had volunteered in Calgary. He had not known of the existence of the Northwest medal until he had travelled to France for the opening of the Vimy monument. On his way home, he met J.J. Hines of Halifax, who was wearing his 1885 medal. Cole even enclosed a photo of himself and Hines, with Hines

[726] Statutory declaration in the Matter of Martin James Kenny. Mackinac, Manitoba. Loss of Dwelling House by Fire. in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[727] Letter from Geo Kyrla Allen to the Secretary of the Minister of Militia and Defence, N.D., in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[728] Letter from Geo. B. Seeds to Minister of Militia, October 26, 1938, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[729] Letter from Edward E. Fisher to the Minister of National Defense, April 25, 1939, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG 24, vol. 5916, 51-4-64 vol. 3, LAC.
[730] Ibid.

proudly displaying his medal.[731] Although Coles' letter does not confirm it, it would seem likely that both he and Hines had served in the First World War – a letter of support from Coles' Legion branch described him as an "enthusiastic member."[732] Regardless, both aging veterans had felt it necessary to voyage across the Atlantic to participate in the unveiling of the Vimy memorial, cementing their place in a brotherhood who had fought and bled for Canada.

English-Canadian volunteers were not alone in seeking replacement medals. At least four French Canadians sought medal replacements in 1935.[733] Their requests did not contain declarations of their loyalty to King and country, but it was evident that their service record was important to them. For example, Sergeant J. Arthur Hamel of Quebec City reported that he had lost the medal while wearing it at a parish festival in St. Malo, Quebec, in the winter of 1931. He only noticed the missing medal when he arrived home and immediately searched the car before returning to the parish hall to look there.[734] The medal was clearly a source of pride for Hamel. Arthur Gagnon of Montreal also declared the importance of his own medal when he wrote in his letter "…je serais très content de pouvoir en avoir une autre [medaille] pour remplacer celle qu m'a êté volée."[735]

Sometimes veterans' organizations would advocate on behalf of an old soldier. In August of 1935, E.W. Low, the Secretary-Treasurer of the North West Field Force, Company of Army and Navy Veterans in Canada (Winnipeg Unit) – the same group that organized the 1935 Winnipeg reunion – wrote to the Department of National Defence on official Field Force letterhead to acknowledge receipt of a veterans medal. Apparently, the veteran had never received a medal, and had some trouble convincing the government to give him one:

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[731] Letter from W.H Cole to unknown, 12 Jan 1937, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[732] Letter from H. Fonger, Secretary, to Officer/Charge, Records, Department of Pensions & National Health, 24 April 1937, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG 24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[733] Letter from J.M. Prower, Brigadier District Officer Commanding Military District No. 5, to the Secretary, Department of National Defence, 20 January 1936, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC. See also lettre de Arthur Gagnon à Ministere defense Nationale, 10 Juillet 1935, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[734] Declaration of Sergeant J. Arthur Hamel, December 9, 1935, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[735] Lettre de Arthur Gagnon à Ministere defense Nationale, 10 Juillet 1935, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.

> He wishes me to thank the department for at last, recognizing his claim, though it did take fifty years to do so; However, I think that he would have got it long ago if he had taken the right method.[736]

Other veterans had influential comrades assist them in their efforts for recognition. In 1938, for example, David Dyson enlisted the help of fellow veteran W.J. Tupper, now Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba. "I have pleasure in certifying that Mr. David J. Dyson is a prominent and well known citizen of Winnipeg", Tupper wrote. He explained that Dyson had been both a local politician and a businessman and then confirmed he had served in the Northwest campaign. He concluded by stating that Dyson "…bears an excellent reputation."[737] The letter is another reminder that many of the volunteers of 1885 were not working-class, but members of the middle class and higher, including elite members of Canadian society such as Dyson and Tupper.

It was not only the soldiers themselves who wrote seeking replacement medals. Sometimes family members sought medals on behalf of elderly or deceased relatives. In late 1935, Mrs. John Dawe, of Cobourg, Ontario, assisted her husband in procuring a copy of his 1885 medal. When it was received in January of 1936, she wrote a letter of thanks that sounded very much like the patriotic gratitude of veterans like Fisher and Allen:

> On behalf of our family my husband and myself we thank you very much. He is a proud man today and so is our 2 sons both Great War Veterans, they're even more proud than their father.[738]

Even after veterans passed away, medals could be important keepsakes for surviving family members. In April of 1939, Ms. F.K Sansom of Claresholm, Alberta, wrote to the Department of Militia and Defence inquiring about a medal for her father, the late Rowland Hopkins.

> I read in the paper the other day where a man who had served during that time had received a medal and it is my understanding that anyone who served at the time of the Riel Rebellion would also receive a medal. To the best of my knowledge he

[736] Letter from E.W. Low to Secretary, Awards Board, Militia Service, Dept.; Nat. Defence, Aug 29, 35, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[737] Letter from W.J. Tupper to whom it may concern, 3 June 1938, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[738] Letter from Mrs. John Dawe to unknown, Department of Militia and Defence, January 27, 1936, in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.

> never received one if there is one coming to him I would be very glad to receive it…. I may say that I am the Executrix of my late father's Estate.[739]

Rowland Hopkins wasn't the only 1885 veteran to be the subject of a posthumous medal request. In November of 1942, A. N. Mouat, former Controller-General of British Columbia and Secretary of the Vancouver Island Branch of the North West Field Force 1885 Association, wrote to the Hon J.L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence, to request a medal for the late Mr. Day Hart Macdowall. After providing evidence of Macdowall's service, Mouat finished his letter by emphasizing how important this would be for the deceased's loved ones, writing "The family would value having substantial evidence of Mr. Macdowall's services during the strenuous times of 1885".[740] Mouat requested that the medal and clasp be forwarded to Macdowall's son – a Barrister in Victoria, B.C.

Macdowall's medal became something of a point of contention. The Department responded that records showed the veteran had served in a civilian capacity, and therefore did not qualify for the medal, posthumously or otherwise. A.N. Mouat wrote once again advocating strenuously for his fellow veteran, quoting dispatches in which Middleton had mentioned Macdowall's service. Mouat compared the situation to the N.W.M.P., which had not initially received the medal – and noted that in the end, "…even those carrying out ordinary police duties and not engaged in any work connected with the rebellion were included."[741] Finally, Mouat made the case that Macdowall had served in a military capacity but without receiving pay – simply serving out of patriotic fervour:

> He was one who would not seek monetary recompense for services rendered to his King and Country. A man of probity and courage he did not hesitate to volunteer for dangerous duty when the occasion occurred 13th April, this alone would imply that he served in a military capacity.[742]

In the end, Mouat's arguments won out; the medal was issued, and in June of 1943 Macdowall's son wrote to the Department of Defence to acknowledge receipt of his father's medal, saying "I

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[739] Letter from Ms. F.K. Sansom to Department of Militia and Defence, 26 April, 1939, , in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[740] Letter from A.N. Mouat to Colonel the Hon. J.L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence, 19 November 1942, , in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reil, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[741] Letter from A.N. Mouat to Major A.C. Chadwick, Secretary, Awards Board, for Adjutant-General, Department of National Defence, Army, 11 January 1943 , in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG 24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC, 2.
[742] Ibid.

greatly appreciate having this medal and ask you to kindly convey my thanks to the Sub-Committee Awards Board."[743]

**"We have done our duty boys": The last days of the veterans**

Even as the ranks of the veterans thinned in the late 1930s and 1940s, they were still able to command public attention and assert their vision of the past in English-Canadian society. Jennifer Reid argues that pride in the achievements of the veterans began to dwindle rather quickly after the campaign ended. She notes the reflection of 1885 eyewitness A.O. Wheeler, who stated in 1934: "Looked back upon through the vista of years the whole episode seems inglorious…."[744] It simply was not the case, however, that most of the veterans or most of the English-Canadian public saw it this way. To the contrary: the volunteers continued to be celebrated by the public, and in these autumn years, aging veterans were still trotted out to be embraced by Canada's political and social elites.

In London, Ontario, for example, when the King and Queen visited the Forest City in June of 1939, it was an honour guard of the 1885 veterans of the 7th Fusiliers who greeted them at the train station.[745] Just five years later, in 1944, the Fusiliers created five copies of a document that collected the Fusiliers' memories of 1885. The volume included the recollections of every surviving member of the unit and the words of a song about the experience of the Fusiliers, called "Down the River." Like many other volunteer memories, it highlighted the humdrum everyday labour of soldiering. The Fusiliers did not see combat, so the song focused on their work transporting oats and other supplies to the front. That is not to say the song is lacking any drama – the chorus still conveys the sense of danger and excitement the volunteers likely felt as they headed west, as well as stereotypical notions of First Nations people as violent and bloodthirsty. In it, they sing: Turn out! Turn out! Turn out! / Your dreams I must dispel. /

[743] Letter from H.C.V. Macdowall to the Secretary, Sub-Committee Awards Board, Department of National Defence (Army) , in Regulations Governing Issue of N.W. 1885 Medal and Reel, RG24, vol. 5916 part 1, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 3, LAC.
[744] Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada*, 39-40.
[745] "Veterans – North West Field Force – 1885 of the 7th Regiment Fusiliers, Daily order of the occasion of the visit of their Majesties King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to London, Ontario, Canada – June 7th, 1939" in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, MG29 E10, LAC.

For the Indians are upon us - / Soon we'll hear their savage yell."[746] The volume also contained photos from both the time of the conflict and from reunions in 1935, 1938 and 1939. The introduction thanked veteran William D. Willis, the Secretary of the North West Field Force association, for providing the contact information of fellow veterans and for "…securing their reminiscences and photographs."[747] Even at this late date, the Canadian militia veterans were still very active in trying to preserve and share their memories of 1885.

The Fusiliers' collection noted that at least one veteran, W.D.I. Wright, was inspired to pen his account of the conflict after hearing about the exploits of the current Fusiliers, who were participating in the occupation of the Aleutian Island of Kiska.[748] Although they were now all too old to serve, some of the volunteers of 1885 still identified closely with their regiments, and those regiments still wanted to identify with the veterans. On 24 October 1942, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, then posted in the United Kingdom, were inspected by W.A. Buchanan, who had been the unit's drummer in 1885. Buchanan, then living in Portsmouth, addressed the troops and spoke about his experience in the conflict, mentioning the battle where the Rifles had received their nickname "Little Black Devils." He then charged the regiment to carry on the old tradition.[749] In doing so, Buchanan legitimized the Royal Winnipeg Rifles by reminding them of their long history – at least by the standards of a Canadian regiment. He was also legitimizing his own identity as a veteran by connecting his past service to present-day patriotism. The press was also happy to make these connections. The *Free Press* in Winnipeg described Buchanan as "the guest of honour" and as "tall and impressively youthful-looking."[750] It was not only the Winnipeg press that was happy to play up old veterans, however. In April of 1945 the *Globe* published a photo of four veterans chatting at the Red Chevron military home with two high-ranking Canadian Army officers who had come for a visit. The caption below the photo noted

[746] "Down the River," in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, LAC.
[747] "Introduction," in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, MG29 E10, LAC.
[748] "Riel Revolt Remembered in the deeds of Fusiliers, by W.D.I. Wright," in The Riel Rebellion in 1885 in the Northwest: Veterans Collections, with Photographs and Data, W.D. Mills collection, MG29 E10, LAC
[749] Brian A. Reid, *Named by the Enemy*, 142.
[750] "City Hero's Wife Attends Investiture in Buckingham," *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 19, 1942.

that among the four was Wes Mark, described as an "85 year-old veteran of the Louis Riel Rebellion of 1885, who served a year overseas in the last war".[751]

The diamond jubilee of the conflict in 1945 gave the surviving veterans one last chance to be the centre of attention and connect their cause to more recent conflicts. In Toronto, veterans once again gathered, albeit in smaller numbers than in 1935. A wreath was placed at the memorial in Queen's Park and speeches were made by veterans and city representatives. A Church service was also held, where Rev. R.S.K. Seely, Provost of Trinity College, complimented the veterans on the service they had rendered sixty years ago.[752]

In Winnipeg the reunion was in many ways a repeat of 1935; a lunchtime banquet was once again held in Assiniboine Park. In attendance were the Mayor and members of Council, as well as representatives of the military.[753] W.J. Tupper, no longer the Lieutenant Governor, attended, but did not sit at the head table; the programme itself noted "…he prefers to sit with "The Boys" ".[754] The luncheon was paid for by the city, but official letterhead for the diamond jubilee noted that the whole affair was also sponsored by the two Winnipeg Units of the Army and Navy Veterans of Canada.[755]

In addition to the luncheon, the reunion also included a visit to the remains of the Upper Fort Garry gate, where the veterans, sporting their medals on civilian jackets, unfurled a flag the Rifles had flown at Fort Pitt in 1885.[756] The historical connections were not exact – the gate was linked to the events of 1869-70, not the events of 1885 – but the symbolic act can be seen as yet another attempt to create historical symmetry, connecting the past and present through historical relics such as the old flag and the crumbling gate. Perhaps the most powerful endorsement of the reunion came from a medal ceremony performed by the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, R.F. McWilliams, on the grounds of the Manitoba Legislature. Accompanying McWilliams was an

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[751] Photo standalone – No Title, *Globe* April 4, 1945, 4.
[752] "Riel Veterans Mark Jubilee," *The Globe*, July 30, 1945, 4.
[753] Luncheon to Veterans of the North West Field Force, 1885, at Assiniboine Park, Saturday, May 19, 1945, 12.45 p.m., Head Table," in Committee on Legislation and Reception, 382, City of Winnipeg Archives.
[754] Luncheon to Veterans of the North West Field Force, 1885, at Assiniboine Park, Saturday, May 19, 1945, 12.45 p.m., "Programme," in Committee on Legislation and Reception, 382, City of Winnipeg Archives.
[755] Letter from Edward Lowe, Secretary, to G.F. Bentley, City Clerk, May 15, 1945, in Committee on Legislation and Reception, 382, City of Winnipeg Archives.
[756] "1945 Veterans, flag of 90th Winnipeg Rifles flown at Fort Pitt," in North West Rebellion 4, Photo collection, Archives of Manitoba.

honour guard of contemporary Canadian soldiers standing at attention. A short film shot at the event shows McWilliams presenting medals to a veteran and to an older woman. The woman is presumably the wife of a veteran who was deceased or not well enough to attend the ceremony. The footage also displays McWilliams shaking hands with many of the old soldiers, who number somewhere between eighty and 100. Finally, the film shows the veterans' visit to Upper Fort Garry gate.[757]

At least some of the veterans recognized that perhaps for the last time, they held the spotlight, and they wanted to use this opportunity to shape the collective memory of their fellow Canadian citizens. Veteran A.N. Mouat was well aware of this. There was no 1945 reunion where he lived on Vancouver Island because their numbers had grown too small – only twenty remained on the Island.[758] Mouat wanted to go east and join the Winnipeg reunion, but was too unwell to do so. Instead, he wrote a letter to the Winnipeg reunion expressing his desire to use the diamond jubilee to share the story of the 1885 volunteers more widely:

> The Rebellion is a notable event in the annals of Canada but few today are aware of what caused it, and of the steps taken to quell it: It is my hope that the Diamond Jubilee will be the means of directing attention to the Rebellion as a matter of history and with this in view there has been put together, from personal diary, official reports and other documents, a brief narrative, in the expectation it may be published by Winnipeg papers in memory of those, many of them very young and without military training, who hurriedly answered the call "To Arms."[759]

Mouat's letter went on to illustrate some of the volunteers' achievements, but then cut the story short, professing that he did not want to weary his readers with tales of old incidents: "…we have the contentment of knowing we did our bit these many years ago, and I will leave it at that."[760] Mouat's understanding of the volunteers' place in Canadian history seemed very much the same as it had been since 1885 – they were heroes who had selflessly served their country in a time of crisis. Mouat's letter also linked the veterans' service to the current conflict, declaring "Our thoughts today are of the glorious and decisive Victory over Germany". Once again, the

[757] Film of the 60th Anniversary of the North West Rebellion of 1885, from May of 1945, Archives of Manitoba.
[758] Allan Jenkins, "Canada's Senior Group of War Veterans Enter Diamond Anniversary Year of Riel Rebellion," Correspondence re manuscript, N.W. Rebellion, 1885," in Robert H. Hougham fonds, M539, File 29, Glenbow Archives.
[759] Letter from A.N. Mouat to "Comrades," May 12, 1945, in Hougham, R.H. Correspondence re manuscript, N.W. Rebellion, 1885," M539, File 29, Glenbow Archives.
[760] Ibid.

volunteers were part of a prestigious Canadian martial tradition. The old enemy – the Métis and First Nations – were nowhere to be seen in his letter, except as a silent foil, allowing the volunteers to show their courage.

This was not to say that Indigenous Peoples were absent from the diamond Jubilee. In Saskatoon, First Nations played a key part in marking the occasion. In a public ceremony in July, the veterans met with First Nations Chiefs and buried an axe. Then, the veterans and chiefs sat down on the stage of the Saskatoon Exhibition and smoked a pipe of peace. The symbolic act did seem to take on something of a religious significance even for the non-Indigenous participants; a note on the back of the photo, likely written by a veteran, stated the experience was "Something like a communion service."[761]

Figure 28: Canadian militia veterans of 1885 smoke a peace pipe with First Nations people, 24 July 1945. Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, R-A33173-2.

At the same event, Saskatoon Pioneer R.W. Caswell gave an address about the events of 1885. With the First Nations Chiefs onstage watching him, Caswell was careful not to pin the blame

[761] Photo of Diamond Jubilee of the Riel Rebellion of 1885, Saskatoon 24 July 1945, R-1260 File XVIII.2, accession no. R87-316, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

solely on the Métis for the outbreak of violence. He also pointed the finger at the government's lethargic response to Métis requests for scrip:

> Mr. Caswell said there was right and wrong on both sides…. "Just after I opened the telegraph office at Duck Lake, Sir John A. Macdonald arrived there with his party and was there just overnight. The halfbreeds nicknamed him 'Mr. Tomorrow.' Had a committee been appointed then and an investigation made there would have been a settlement. "I knew the breeds well and stopped in their homes many a night," said Mr. Caswell. "All they wanted was justice."[762]

It is worth noting that the Métis were hardly the only group to nickname Sir John A. Macdonald "Old Tomorrow," and the name likely did not originate with them. Regardless, it was clear that Caswell was expressing sympathy for the Métis. When in closer proximity to Indigenous people with living memory of the conflict, Canadian militia veterans were more likely to make at least some room for Indigenous voices, and seemed more inclined to give consideration to Indigenous points of view. Outside of the conflict's heartland, however, the volunteers' narrative dominated almost completely.

The 1945 diamond jubilee was perhaps the volunteers' last moment in the national limelight, but it was not yet their final bow. The veterans continued to seek each other out, in order to reaffirm their memories of 1885. In March of 1949, thirteen men of the 10th Royal Grenadiers answered a 65th Roll Call of the 1885 veterans.[763] Presumably, most were too weak to travel for a reunion, but it was evident they still wanted to share their sense of brotherhood with their fellow veterans – the roll call was sent out as a card with the names and addresses of surviving veterans and a little note. The card included a quote from "The Khan," the pen name of Canadian poet Robert Kernighan: "By jingo! We were at Batoche / And fit at Fish Creek too, begosh!" Below the quote was a note wherein the author, S.H. Dye, celebrated the fact that "For the first time, since I started to get out these cards for a record of our boys," the same number of men had answered the roll call two years running. Dye's note concluded with the following:

> So here's to the Army, the Navy and the Queen, for we have done our duty, boys, wherever we have been, when out on Active Service, we made the rebels flee, we have the good old British pluck in the 10th R.G.[764]

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[762] "First Shot of Rebellion Accidental," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, July 25, 1945, 3.
[763] March 30th, 1949, 65th Roll Call, in Dye, S.H., Annual roll list of 10th Royal Grenadier survivors of Riel rebellion, 1935-49, in 10th Battalion, Royal Grenadiers fonds, M1645, Glenbow Archives.
[764] Ibid.

In their final years, the veterans continued to have political clout. In 1943 and 1944 the Saskatchewan section of the North West Field Force Association began lobbying to have medals issued to the members of the transport service.[765] They were joined in their efforts by A.N. Mouat who wrote the government seeking a copy of the Order in Council that made new medals official.[766] In April 1945, the government announced it would award medals to transport service veterans. At the time of the issue, there were still thirteen left in Manitoba and sixty-eight in Saskatchewan.[767] This was perhaps the volunteers' final victory, sixty years after they had been in the field, but it was not their final battle. In April of 1950, Judge A. Gray Farrell, a former member of the Princess of Wales' Own Rifles in Kingston, received a final reply to his request that the 1885 medal be extended to all who were mustered at the time, even if their regiment was not sent west. In this case, the government declined, noting that "I am sure you will appreciate that if appeals of this type were granted many more would be made by veterans of all other wars who were denied medals within the regulation and there would be no stability whatever in the arrangements."[768]

Even in their final days, the remaining volunteers felt ever more compelled to find ways to share their memories, not just with their fellow veterans – but also with the wider public. In 1946, A.N. Mouat published an account of the conflict in the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Quarterly* and sent copies of it to various institutions with connections to 1885, such as the Hudson's Bay Company, the Royal Winnipeg Rifles and the town of Battleford, Saskatchewan.[769] Mouat was very concerned with presenting the history of 1885 properly – he wrote to the *Winnipeg Free Press* to correct errors in a story he had read about how the 90th Rifles had come to be known as "The Little Black Devils."[770] Forging collective memory in a piecemeal fashion was important, but it was not enough for Mouat. By 1949, he had begun work

[765] *Military General Service 1793-1814*, 45. See also Memorandum from Col. M.S. to A.G., Office of the Minister of National Defence, July 7, 1943, Regulations governing issue of N.W. Medal and Reil, RG24 vol. 5916, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 4, LAC.
[766] Letter from A.N. Mouat to the Secretary of State, 16 June 1945, Regulations governing issue of N.W. Medal and Reel, RG24 vol. 5916, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 4, LAC.
[767] "Recognize Drivers in Riel Rebellion" clipping, Regulations governing issue of N.W. Medal and Reel, RG24 vol. 5916, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 4, LAC.
[768] Letter from Brooke Claxton, Minister of National Defence, to His Honour Judge A. Gray Farrell, 28th April, Regulations governing issue of N.W. Medal and Reel, RG24 vol. 5916, file no. HQ-51-4-64, vol. 4, LAC.
[769] Various letters to A.N. Mouat, 1946, R.H. Correspondence re manuscript, N.W. Rebellion, 1885," in Robert Hougham fonds, M539, file 29, Glenbow Archives.
[770] "Black Devils: Veteran Notes Errors in Article on Corps," *Winnipeg Free Press,* March 18, 1937, 1.

on a more extensive narrative of the conflict. The account was based in part on his own diary, but Mouat also sought input from a range of sources. In August of 1949, for example, he wrote to the Mayor of Saskatoon requesting any photos of the field hospital that had been located there in 1885. Mouat mentioned a desire to include information about Nurse Miller, "…who was spoken of as having been more than kind to the wounded lads, many of whom were very young."[771] This was one of the few occasions where a volunteer had declared a desire to acknowledge the work of the women on the campaign; clearly, Mouat wanted to write a very comprehensive account of the conflict. Mouat completed a number of chapters and even included appendixes.[772] His comprehensive account of 1885 was never published, presumably because Mouat passed away before finishing.

Other veterans did manage to publish memoirs in their autumn years. G.H. Needler was one – he marched with Colonel Otter in the Battleford Column and then went on to become head of the German Department at University College in the University of Toronto. Needler remained very interested in the history of 1885 until the end of his days; in 1949, he was corresponding with George M. Douglas, the son of Colonel C.M. Douglas. In 1885, the senior Douglas had canoed more than 320 kilometres alone on the South Saskatchewan River in order to serve as a surgeon on the campaign. In a letter to the younger Douglas, Needler described the canoe journey as "thrillingly interesting." Concluding his letter, Needler declared, "I shall not write more just now, but assure that your letter has given me immense pleasure."[773] Ultimately, Needler ended up writing the introduction for an account of Colonel Douglas' journey that appeared in *The Beaver*.[774]

Needler was doing far more than just writing introductions. In his later years, he produced not one, but two volumes about 1885. The first work, called *The Battleford Column*, was published in 1948. It was an ambitious project: a re-telling of Needler's own campaign

[771] Letter from A.N. Mouat to the Mayor of Saskatoon, 2 August 1949, Correspondence re manuscript, N.W. Rebellion, 1885," in Robert H. Hougham fonds, M539, file 29, Glenbow Archives.
[772] Manuscript chapters, Correspondence re manuscript, N.W. Rebellion, 1885," in Robert H. Hougham fonds, M539, file 29, Glenbow Archives.
[773] Letter from G.H Needler to George M. Douglas, 22 Jan 1949, in Correspondence Between G.H. Needler and George M. Douglas, 1949, in G.H. Needler fonds, accession no. S86-98, F514, file no. 3, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan, 2.
[774] Letter from George M. Douglas to Clifford Wilson, 14 March 1949, in Correspondence Between G.H. Needler and George M. Douglas, 1949, in G.H. Needler fonds, accession no. S86-98, F514, file no. 3, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan. See also "The Lone Canoeist of 1885," *The Beaver*, June 1950, 38-41.

experience but written in poetic verse rather than the more usual prose. The opening lines of *The Battleford Column* could easily be mistaken for a jingoistic English-Canadian poem from 1885:

> We heard the call, - 'twas years ago three score / "Duck Lake!" resounded from the far Northwest; / Fanatic still, as fifteen years before, / Riel returned on his deluded quest, / Red Men to join his Halfbreeds egging on ; / Red River then, and now Saskatchewan.[775]

In these six verses, Needler hit all of the usual notes of the volunteer narrative: the patriotic volunteers answer the call to duty and save their new nation from the evil Riel, who had duped the First Nations into open revolt against the government. The author also did not dwell on the battle of Cut Knife Hill, or identify it as a retreat – much like Otter's 1925 plaque, Needler argued the "reconnaissance in force" had achieved its goal:

> Five men lay dead one night beside my tent / "Reconnaissance in force to Cut knife Hill" ; / I will not pause minutely to comment / On trying obstacles o'releaped with skill. / The threat was turned: Poundmaker, sly offender, / Sought presently a parley for surrender.[776]

Needler's published a second volume on the rebellion in 1957, this time in regular prose. Entitled *Louis Riel: The Rebellion of 1885* the work continued to resolutely defend the volunteer narrative. In the preface, Needler made it clear that this was a conscious choice on his part:

> Riel's criminal conduct in inciting the Indians all over the Northwest Territories to go on the warpath itself settles the question of his guilt, and makes simply ludicrous the desire of a certain number of Canadians to have him viewed as a hero and a martyr. The extracts which I have quoted from his *Poesies religieuses et politiques*, added to the letter written by him to the editor of the Irish World in New York three days before the battle of Batoche began, are commended to the attention of those who still see in him a patriotic Canadian.[777]

Needler's characterization of Riel and his actions does not look very different from assessments made by English Canadians such as Boulton, Mulvaney, and others in 1885. What was different in 1957, however, is that Needler was referring to "a certain number of Canadians" who were sympathetic to Riel and his cause. Beneath Needler's confident affirmation of the volunteer

[775] G.H. Needler, *The Battleford Column: Versified Memories of a Queen's Own Corporal in the Northwest Rebellion 1885* (Montreal: The Provincial Publishing Co. Ltd., 1948), 5.
[776] Ibid, 45.
[777] G.H. Needler, *Louis Riel: The Rebellion of 1885* (Toronto: Burns & MacEachern, 1957), Preface.

narrative, one can sense a rising fear that collective memory in English Canada was beginning to change.

One change was inevitable: the last of the volunteers were passing away. Needler's 1957 book was possibly the last concerted effort by a veteran to shape public memory, but it was not the last time a veteran would participate in public commemoration. In October of 1958, Dr. Robert H. Campbell, who served as the bugler for the 90th Rifles in 1885, was given an engraved mug on the occasion of the regiment's seventy-fifth anniversary. Campbell even briefly addressed the regiment's current members, who were drawn up in the parade square for the occasion.[778] As far as is known, this was the last public appearance of an 1885 Canadian militia veteran.

The celebration of Canada's 1885 volunteers had come full circle. Commemoration involving living veterans had begun in Winnipeg in 1886 with the unveiling of a massive monument, and it had ended in that same city with the presentation of an engraved mug. The days of the veterans had finally drawn to a close. Less than fifteen years after the publication of *Louis Riel*, much of the change Needler feared would come to pass – Riel would begin his transformation into a Canadian patriot. Meanwhile, the patriotism of Needler's beloved volunteers would swiftly recede from public memory, largely forgotten by the English-Canadian public.

**"What they died for has faded away": Shifting memories in a changing nation**

The process had begun even before the last of the veterans were gone. As early as the 1930s, English-Canadian historians began to express increasingly sympathetic views of Riel and the Métis, although scholars fell far short of declaring him a hero.[779] A more concrete change – both literally and figuratively – was the replacement of the HSMBC plaque at Batoche. In June of 1939, instructions were finally given to remove the defaced bronze tablet and send it back to

[778] Newspaper clipping, Winnipeg, Wednesday October 8, 1958, Campbell, Robert D. # 2 File, Box 4, Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum.
[779] Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada*, 40 and Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel," 323. McCullough also notes that Kennedy was publishing sympathetic pamphlets as early as 1928. "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance", 430.

the National Parks Bureau.[780] It is likely that the addition to the HSMBC of new Western representatives, who were far more amenable to accommodating alternate views of the past, tipped the scales in favour of action. McCullough reports the new Manitoba Member, Father d'Eschambault, was an active member of the St. Boniface Historical Society, while J.A. Gregory, the new member from Saskatchewan, 'had spoken at length... on Metis History and their right to some consideration from the government".[781]

In May of 1940, in response to an inquiry as to the whereabouts of the inscription, Parks Controller F.H.H. Williamson explained that a new tablet was to be designed and placed back on the cairn in the near future.[782] This time the inscription was to be crafted with the input of the Francophone community. The beginning of the Second World War initially delayed further action at Batoche[783] but in 1943, the Board chose to assign the consultation to Board member Father d'Eschambault of St. Boniface, Manitoba.[784]

Father d'Eschambault's consultation focused heavily on the local Catholic hierarchy – he consulted several priests, as well as the Bishop of Prince-Albert. The first draft of bilingual inscriptions were radically different from what had come before. The English version read as follows: "After three days of uneven struggle the Metis disbanded and Riel, their Chief, surrendered." The French version, however, was far more explicit in its sympathies. It read: "Après trois jours de résistance héroïque, les métis se dispersent et Riel, leur chef, se constitue prisonnier."[785]

The change from the use of the word "uneven" in the English inscription to the word "heroic" in the French transformed the emphasis of the commemoration entirely. The English version was also far more sympathetic to the Métis than the 1924 text. In the 1943 version, the Canadians had not overrun the Métis defenders – instead, the Métis had simply "disbanded."

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[780] Letter from F.H.H. Williamson, Controller, to The Commissioner, RCMP, 28th June, 1939, RG84, Series A-2-a, Volume 979, File BA2, Part 3, LAC.
[781] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance", 431-432.
[782] Letter from F.H.H. Williamson, Controller, to J.C. Henry, Esq. 15th May 1940. RG84, Series A-2-a, Volume 979, File BA2, Part 3, LAC.
[783] In a 17th March 1947 letter to RCMP, Controller J. Smart notes: "I might add that the erection of new tablets was postponed for several years due to the war." RG84 Series A-2-a, Volume 979, File BA2, Part 3, LAC.
[784] Extract of Minutes of Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada Annual Meeting - May 19, 20, 21, 1943, RG, 84 Series A-2-a, Volume 979, File BA2, Part 3, LAC.
[785] Letter from J.H.O. Allard, O.M.I., to Father A. d'Eeschambault, July 15, 1943, RG, 84 Series A-2-a, Volume 979, File BA2, Part 3, LAC.

The word brought up images of the men in the gun pits shrugging their shoulders and going home - not because they were defeated, but because they decided to leave. Perhaps most important, the word "rebels" was nowhere to be found in either inscription.

Officials at Parks Canada responded with a new inscription of their own. The government wanted the French and English to be direct translations of one another, and proposed a script very close to the 1925 text, although it did replace the word "rebels" with "Métis". It was thought expedient to use the word "Métis" in the English version as well.

> Incidentally, I suppose the English translation of Metis is Halfbreeds, but I take it would be desirable to use the word Metis in the English version rather than Halfbreeds. I doubt if the people in this part of the world know the meaning of the word but I expect that in the neighbourhood of Batoche they probably do.[786]

By May of 1944 the Board and the Church had agreed upon an inscription which would be basically the same in French and English. It read as follows:

> Here, on the 15th May, 1885, after four days of fighting, the Metis under Louis Riel surrendered to General Middleton commanding the Canadian Troops.
> Ici, le 15 Mai 1885, après quatre jours de combat, les Métis sous Louis Riel se redirent au General Middleton, commandant des forces canadiennes.[787]

After much delay, Parks Canada attached the new inscriptions to the stone Cairn at Batoche in June of 1947, with no pomp or ceremony.[788]

The trend seen at Batoche was accelerated at Cut Knife Hill, where a new plaque admitted that the Canadian soldiers under Otter had indeed retreated after six hours of fighting.[789] For this new plaque, there was plenty of pomp and ceremony, with an unveiling in 1952 that was attended by the Governor General. Perhaps more importantly, the Chiefs of the Poundmaker, Sweet Grass and Little Pine reserves had organized the unveiling. The cover of the program featured a picture of Fine Day, who was labelled "General of the Indian Forces, May 2,

[786] Letter to the Reverend A. d'Eschambault, 22 December 1943, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 3, LAC.
[787] Extract of Minutes of Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Annual Meeting - 24th, 25th, 26th May, 1944, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol. 979, file BA2, part 3, NAC.
[788] Letter from [ill] for W.D. Cromarty, Superintendent of Historic Sites and Landscaping, to Reverend Leo Boose, O.M.I., 14th July 1947, in Batoche National Historic Site, RG84, series A-2-a, vol 979, file BA2, part 3, NAC.
[789] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance", 436.

1885."[790] General Otter was nowhere to be seen. A note inside the program also noted that both descendants of Canadian militia veterans and "Indian warriors of 1885" were invited to attend the unveiling. In his speech, Governor General Massey states "…nobody has a greater loyalty and devotion to the Person of Her Majesty the Queen than Her Majesty's Indian Subjects."[791] HSMBC member Campbell Innes also attended and spoke at the unveiling. In his speech, was quick to acknowledge the justness of the First Nations' cause, stating, "This historic Cairn reveals the fact that the Indians loved and fought to preserve their rights in the primitive soil." Innes was also sure to emphasize the willingness of the Canadian militia to "…answer the call of Duty", but his greatest emphasis was on the unity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. Innes claimed that at Cut Knife Hill, Poundmaker had prevented his braves from pursuing the retreating Canadian troops because he "…recognized that his Indians were brother Canadians, all of whom soon may gain the prized equal rights of citizenship." In concluding his speech, he declared: "From such Cairns as this may we keep reviving the pages of our history to gain a greater understanding of the ideals of our kindred races to praise and glorify Canada."[792] It would have been impossible for an HSMBC member such as Howay to have given such a speech in 1925, or perhaps at any point in his life.

Alongside Campbell Innes and the governor general, Chief Favel gave an acceptance speech that was brief and to the point, but made it clear that in his eyes, the new inscription gave pride of place to First Nations veterans:

> I am very pleased to receive today this Cairn erected on Poundmaker's Reserve by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, in memory of our Indian forefathers who fought so valiantly on Cut Knife Hill, May 2, 1885 and in memory of the troops of the Canadian Militia.[793]

The monument was now dedicated to the memory of First Nations veterans first, and the Canadian militia veterans second. It is worth noting that Chief Favel had noted that the First Nations warriors had fought "valiantly" but felt no need to describe the Canadian militia soldiers

[790] "Cut Knife Hill Monument Unveiling," in A113, Innes Papers, IV. Mounted Police Memorial and Indian Museum, (a) Subject Files, 8. Cut Knife Program, November 2, 1952, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[791] Governor General's Speech, in A113, Innes Papers, IV. Mounted Police Memorial and Indian Museum, (a) Subject Files, 8. Cut Knife Program, November 2, 1952, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[792] Campbell Innes speech, in A113, Innes Papers, IV. Mounted Police Memorial and Indian Museum, (a) Subject Files, 8. Cut Knife Program, November 2, 1952, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[793] Speech by Chief Favel, in A113, Innes Papers, IV. Mounted Police Memorial and Indian Museum, (a) Subject Files, 8. Cut Knife Program, November 2, 1952, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

in such a fashion. Chief Favel went on to promise his people would guard and honour the Cairn "…down through the ages, to the glory of Canada."[794] This might be true, but it was a very different Canada than had existed even just a generation earlier.

This shift was not only taking place at memorial sites. As the ranks of veterans thinned, more and more voices began to appear calling for a reassessment of 1885. In 1951 Edward Ahenakew – the Cree Anglican Priest who in 1915 had written impassioned poetry about the Frog Lake Massacre – penned an article in the *Western Producer*. The title was simply "Sixty-Five Years Ago," but the sub-heading better explained the content of the article: "Sixty-five Years Ago the Frog Lake Massacre Shocked the Country. The White Man's Case Was Well Aired, His Courts Acted. Now a Strong Voice Speaks for the Silent Indian."[795] Ahenakew did not try to argue innocence for those who committed the massacre. Instead he claimed extenuating circumstances: "I do feel that this sad blot in our history should have the advantage of any extenuating circumstances that may be."[796] Ahenakew felt that though wrong, the massacre could at least be understood as a reaction to the loss of freedom experienced after the arrival of white settler Canadians in the Northwest. Ahenakew was still very apologetic, stating that his own Cree ancestry made him hesitant to say too much:

> Indian-like, I dislike speaking too much but I am anxious to have the Indian given all justice in connection with that deed which to me looks like an old curse upon one of our missions. I write because I feel it my duty to speak for my race where they are obliged, through lack of education, to sit like a dumb nation, while opinions concerning them are being formed throughout the continent and those opinions based on startling magazine stories and of writings of literary gifted ones who see only the surface part of their life.[797]

Not all advocates of Indigenous peoples were quite as timid in their arguments as Ahenakew. In May of 1961, Malcolm Norris, a Métis man, advocate of Indigenous rights and an avid socialist, gave an impassioned speech at Batoche Cemetery. In the speech Norris defended the Métis cause and applauded their fighting skill. Of Gabriel Dumont, he said:

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[794] Ibid.
[795] Edward Ahenakew, "Sixty-five Years Ago," in *The Western Producer Magazine*, Jan 11, 1951, clipping in Collection R1454, "Articles, Ahenakew, Edward, 1951, No I. 1a, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[796] Ibid.
[797] Ibid.

> Gabriel Dumont will live on in the hearts of all Canadian patriots when the double-dealing politicians and greed exploiters are all forgotten. He was a great man, a great Canadian. His dream lives on in the hearts and minds of tens of millions of people throughout the world in their passionate desire for social justice and the right to lead decent human lives. We must keep his memory green. It will inspire new generations of Canadians in the struggles that lie ahead for peace, democracy and Canadian independence.[798]

Norris' words were very nearly a mirror image of the volunteers' narrative; instead of honouring the Canadian militia, true patriotic Canadians would celebrate Dumont, the man who had led the fight against them. Instead of exhorting listeners to draw inspiration from the sacrifices made by the brave volunteers, Norris called on his audience to emulate Dumont in his stalwart defence of his people's rights. There is no doubt that Dumont and the Métis had been honoured at Batoche in the past; Dumont's grave and the original Batoche monument were clear evidence of that. Even English Canadians had long given Dumont and the Métis under his command a grudging respect. But in general, Dumont had been honoured as a great Métis leader. Norris was insisting that Dumont was not just an exemplary Métis – he was an exemplary Canadian.

This emphasis did not change when Norris was speaking for a primarily white audience. In 1962, the 100th Regiment of Canada – a descendant of one of the units that had served in 1885 – visited Batoche to honour all those who had lost their lives in the conflict. The Métis community was involved from the start, planning to unveil a marker at the grave of Gabriel Dumont as part of the Batoche ceremony. John Tootoosis, President of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians, was asked to speak and represent First Nations, while Malcolm Norris was asked to speak on behalf of the Métis.[799] Morris was once again strident in his defence of the Métis and First Nations. He began his speech by questioning the traditional wisdom about 1885:

> Madam Chairman, as a representative of the Métis people, I feel we do take exception to this term "Rebellion," in the sense of rebelling against the Crown. It is unfortunate that early historians have recorded the Métis struggle for justice in

[798] "Speech by Malcolm Norris at Batoche Cemetery, May 22, 1961," 3, in Glenbow Archives, James Brady Fonds, Series 3, M125 File 46.
[799] Feature distributed by the Saskatchewan Department of Industry and Information in connection with the visit to Saskatchewan of the Royal Regiment of Canada and observance at Batoche planned for July 4, 1962, in Glenbow Archives, James Brady fonds, Series 3, M125 File 46.

> this light. It is even more unfortunate that in our schools the facts of the Northwest uprising were distorted.[800]

Norris compared Riel to Papineau and Mackenzie, leaders of the 1837 Rebellions in Quebec and Ontario, declaring that Riel "carried on a similar battle for freedom". He celebrated Métis military prowess and called on the plaque at Fish Creek to be changed to describe the battle as a win for Dumont and his forces. In his conclusion, Norris declared the Canadian government's treatment of First Nations and Métis to be a "blot" on the country – one that would need to be corrected before Canada could move forward as a nation.[801]

Of course, Norris was speaking in the Métis heartland – and Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan had shown themselves willing to challenge the volunteer narrative publicly since at least 1925. But there is no denying that the challengers were becoming more strident. And with the passing of the last veterans, those voices also began to appear in greater numbers outside of Saskatchewan. In 1962, the same year Norris addressed the 100th Regiment at Batoche, the City of Winnipeg moved its volunteer monument from its place of pride in front of the old City Hall to make way for new construction.[802] With the approval of the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the column was relocated across the street and rededicated by Mayor Stephen Juba in 1963.[803] In 1968, the city once again moved and rededicated the memorial, this time to make room for the construction of the Centennial Arts Centre. By 1968, however, some people were beginning to question whether the monument's story was one that Canadians really needed to hear. In a letter to the editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Robert Golinoski of Fort Garry noted that he felt "…it would be difficult to explain to Metis and Indian young people why their government leaders should participate in rededicating a monument that marks the defeat and destruction of the Metis and Indian voice in the West."[804] Golinoski further explained, "In over powering this armed rebellion there appears to have been little that can be regarded as

[800] Speech planned by Malcolm Norris for July 4, 1962, in Glenbow Archives, James Brady fonds, Series 3, M125 File 46.
[801] Ibid.
[802] Moving Volunteer Monument in front of City Hall to South-east corner of Main Street and James Avenue. File A. 62B(10), in *Minutes of City Council, 1962*, City of Winnipeg Archives, 88.
[803] Placing property at south-east corner of Main Street and James Avenue under management of Winnipeg Board of Parks and Recreation. File A 62 C, April 29, 1963, in *Minutes of City Council, 1963*, City of Winnipeg Archives, 347.
[804] "Political Doubletalk," *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 15, 1968, 58.

honourable and even less that warranted rededication."[805] Golinoski was no longer a voice in the wilderness. In 1970, a statue of Louis Riel was dedicated at the provincial legislature, where he was celebrated as the founder of Manitoba. The Red River expedition veterans and the Northwest Field Force veterans were now being usurped by a man they had defeated twice.

Interestingly, the Canadian veterans were not being usurped by the rank-and-file Métis and First Nations veterans – rather, they were being replaced in the Canadian pantheon of heroes by two men: Riel and Dumont. Historians Doug Owram and Daniel Francis have both argued that Riel in particular became attractive to English Canadians as their views of 1885 began to shift, in part because he was a malleable figure who could be made to represent many causes. Francis has stated that "Riel has emerged as an all-purpose hero who manages to be different things to different people, depending on what they want him to be... his significance changes shape depending from what angle you look at him."[806] Owram, meanwhile, has argued that English Canadians had more or less adopted the traditional French-Canadian view of Riel as a defender of the French language and culture.[807] It was, of course, far more complicated than this. First Nations and Métis communities in the west had also been publicly asserting their narrative, and this also influenced some English Canadians. It is worth noting that when Golinoski complained about the Winnipeg volunteers' monument in 1968, he cited the negative effect it would have on First Nations and Métis, not the damage to culture and language. Regardless of where the influence was coming from, there is no denying that Riel was gaining a new stature in English Canada.

As the 1970s progressed, there was far more sympathy in English Canada for the Métis cause, and it begin to manifest itself in public media. In 1973, Al Purdy published a poem called "The Battlefield at Batoche." In his writing, Purdy expresses sympathy for both the Canadian militia soldiers and their Indigenous opponents, but leaves little doubt that the greatest tragedy of 1885 is the disaster that befell the Métis and First Nations. For him, the most important names to remember are those of the Indigenous veterans:

> here a little way under the black soil / where wheat yellow as a girl's hair
> blossoms / the Metis nation was born and died / as the last buffalo stumbles to

[805] Ibid.
[806] Francis, *National Dreams*, 114.
[807] Owram, "The Myth of Louis Riel,", 332.

> his knees / and felt cold briefly while his great wool / blanket was ripped from his bloody shoulders / It is for Parenteau and Desjarlais / Ah-si-we-in of the Woods Crees / for Laframboise and old Ouellette / and dark girls left alone / that such words as mine are spoken / and perhaps also for Gunner Phillips / in his grave above the South Saskatchewan / but most for myself [808]

Purdy's poem beautifully captures the shift in English-Canadian collective memory regarding 1885. His primary sympathies lie with the Indigenous peoples whose lifeways were damaged and disrupted and he only spares sympathy for Phillips the Canadian soldier as an afterthought; the use of the word "perhaps" is telling. Purdy also demonstrates a self-awareness in his poetry, stating that he writes this poem mostly for himself. There is a recognition that the past is always recalled to serve the needs of the present. Purdy is further aware that the needs of the present have changed, and what was once celebrated is now forgotten. He writes:

> In evening listening / to the duplicate rain-sound on the roof / of our camped trailer it seems / that I was wrong about my motives / and the dark girls mourning at Batoche / the dead men in shallow rifle pits / these mean something / the rain speaks to them / the seasons pass / just outside their hearing / but what they died for has faded away / and become something quite different / past justice and injustice / beyond old Ouellette and his youngest grandson[809]

Purdy recognizes that the silence of the veterans – of the dead – had allowed Batoche's meaning to change and evolve, to the point where an English Canadian such as Purdy could have more sympathy for the Métis than for the government troops. English Canadians had certainly expressed sympathy for the Métis and First Nations cause in the past, but by the 1970s and 1980s, they appeared to be increasingly identifying with the Indigenous combatants rather than those who had fought on the side of the Canadian government. In 1979, when the CBC made a big-budget (by Canadian standards, at least) film about the Riel rebellions, Riel was now the unquestioned hero of the story – as if to drive home that point, the film was simply entitled *Riel*.

It should be noted that *Riel* was not written with historical accuracy in mind. Characters often had anachronistic words put into their mouths. For instance, John A. Macdonald, played by a scene-chewing Christopher Plummer, accuses Riel of separatism – a very contemporary concern. In one interview promoting the film, Plummer warned against being "bamboozled by facts," arguing *Riel* did a better job of getting the story of Riel across than high school textbooks

[808] Al Purdy, "The Battlefield at Batoche," in *Sex and Death* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 42.
[809] Ibid, 43.

did.[810] Not everyone agreed; historians such as Michael Bliss lambasted the production for its careless approach to the past.[811] When it came to the Canadian militia veterans, the show was not so much inaccurate as disinterested; the Canadian volunteers, who were the stars of the show in 1885 – at least in English Canada – played bit parts in the 1979 film. *Riel* did not portray the Canadian militia veterans as evil – though in the film's version of history, their leaders often had sinister intentions – but they were no longer in the limelight. Interestingly, the film did keep elements of the militia myth, with the practical Canadian volunteers knowing better how to defeat the Métis at Batoche than the pompous General Middleton.[812] One particular veteran was portrayed as unequivocally evil: Thomas Scott. In the film, Scott is not just a foot soldier in the ranks of the Canadian party – he is one of their leaders, and he is depicted as racist, ignorant and quick to anger. The most important difference, however, is in Scott's crime. In the film version of *Riel*, Scott actually attempts to assassinate Riel but fails. He is planning a second attempt when he is caught by the Métis. For this crime, Scott is charged with treason and executed.[813]

The Métis, in contrast, were largely portrayed in a positive light. They were also depicted as a wild west, frontier stereotype, and some historians took exception to this. Interviewed on CBC-TV news in April 1979, Manitoba historian W.L. Morton declared that while he was "horrified" by the "grossly inaccurate" depiction of the past in Riel, he was particularly upset about the movie's portrayal of the Métis. In the film, Dumont describes his people as "Strong like the Indian, crazy like the French and free to roam like the buffalo in a land that belongs to no man and all men."[814] Morton remarked that this was a "wild west" version of the Métis and declared, "They're not wild west at all - they never were."[815] Others scholars, such as Diane Payment of Parks Canada, saw things very differently. She felt vindicated by the film:

> The author has not only depicted Louis as a hero but has even dared to portray the Protestant Anglo Canadians as the badguys. In some strange way, the film atones for Riel's lifelong suffering and persecution.[816]

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[810] "Plummer pleased with Riel movie," *Regina Leader-Post*, Tuesday 17 April 1979, 17.
[811] Michael Bliss, "Riel was unreal," *Toronto Star*, Wednesday 18 April 1979, C1.
[812] *Riel*, CBC-TV, 1979.
[813] Ibid.
[814] Ibid.
[815] "Riel movie inaccurate, say critics," CBC-TV News, 16 April 1979, http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/louis-riel-movie-inaccurate-say-critics (accessed 20 November 2017).
[816] Eugene Walz, Diane Payment and Emma Laroque, "Three Views of Riel," *Manitoba History*, No 1, 1981. http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/01/threeviewsofriel.shtml (accessed 15 June 2017).

In stark contrast to the Métis, First Nations Peoples were mostly left out of the film, with barely a mention of Cut Knife Hill, Big Bear or Poundmaker. The Métis remained the focus of the production throughout.

Most reviews of *Riel* were positive, but there were still some willing to defend the good name of Thomas Scott and his comrades. Nan Shipley of the *Winnipeg Free Press* remarked, "the defamation of such characters as Mrs. Schultz and Thomas Scott is unforgivable." Mrs. Schultz was a "tiny, delicate lady," while Thomas Scott was only guilty of a "…refusal to renounce his British citizenship and pledge allegiance to Riel's Provisional Government, and his escape from prison." Shipley concluded "the film called *Riel* distorts historic facts, reveals few honourable deeds and men, and heaps ugly calumny on the countless pioneers and builders of Manitoba."[817] By 1979, however, Shipley was increasingly in the minority.

CBC was far more interested in Riel and the Métis than the history of the volunteers. In 1985, CBC radio launched a series called *The Riel Commission: An Inquiry into the Survival of a People*. The production featured fictional elements, such as a commissioner played by Donald Sutherland, who questioned actors playing historical figures such as Riel himself. It also featured factual documentary components, such as contemporary Métis leaders reading speeches they had prepared themselves. The series, unlike the *Riel* film of 1979, was concerned with more than just being sympathetic to the Métis. The producers wanted an authentic Métis voice – both historical and contemporary – to be heard by the Canadian public:

> "The first thing we had to solve," says scriptwriter Rex Deverell, "was how to do the series without becoming part of the problem. We wanted a format that allowed Metis people to tell their own story, and we wanted to include some historical documents as well.[818]

In an interview, actor Donald Sutherland even named Riel, along with Norman Bethune, as "…my heroes and guides to the Canadian Spirit."[819] As with *Riel,* the Canadian militia veterans were not portrayed as villains – instead, they had simply disappeared. English-Canadians no longer felt a strong loyalty to them or their cause. That a white, English-Canadian male from

[817] Nan Shipley, "Manitoba's mutilated history," *Winnipeg Free Press,* Friday 20 April 1979, 8.
[818] Bill Prentice, "CBC's 'Riel Commission' sheds light on Metis Spirit," *The Globe and Mail,* 11 May 1985, A12.
[819] Ibid.

Eastern Canada could confidently proclaim Riel as a guide to the "Canadian spirit" demonstrated just how far collective memory had shifted since the deaths of the last volunteers.

This is not to say there was no one left to commemorate the veterans – many military traditions continued regardless of the popular zeitgeist. These traditions sometimes faced condemnation, however. In 1984, the Royal Regiment of Canada held its eighty-ninth annual Batoche dinner – and the first to which women were invited.[820] The event was written up in the *Globe and Mail* on May 16, and two weeks later, the paper published an angry rebuttal to the event. James B. Waldram of the University of Saskatchewan wrote a letter to the editor calling the write-up "distasteful," and declaring, "How can any segment of Canadian society justify an annual dinner which recalls with fondness the bloodshed and distress it perpetrated against another segment of Canadian Society?"[821] Waldram also questioned the factual accuracy of the military narrative. In the article, Colonel Beatty of the Royals had stated that the conflict had "…threatened the area between Manitoba and the Rockies with anarchy and bloodshed in early 1885."[822] Waldram countered that the actual scope of the resistance had been quite small, and further claimed that the Royals should not be proud of defeating "…a small, loosely organized and poorly equipped Métis force".[823] Waldram concluded that the battle of Batoche was a "sordid" victory that should not be celebrated.

By the early 1980s, Parks Canada was once again reinterpreting Batoche National Historic site, shifting the narrative to align more closely with both the public and with the new histories. In January of 1980, Parks published a document entitled *Batoche National Historic Site: Help Write Its Future*. The document explained that Parks was preparing a new management plan for Batoche and was looking for public feedback about how to proceed, althought the broad strokes of the new approach had already been decided. The booklet divided the different stories it wanted to tell at Batoche into "themes," and declared two "equally important" themes for the site: "The North-West Rebellion of 1885" and "Métis settlement in the

[820] Zena Cherry, "Battle of Batoche remembered by Royal Regiment of Canada**,"** *The Globe and Mail*, 16 May 1984, M6.
[821] James B. Waldram, "No reason to celebrate sordid battle of Batoche," *The Globe and Mail*, 2 June 1984, L4
[822] Cherry, "Battle of Batoche remembered by Royal Regiment of Canada."
[823] Waldram, "No reason to celebrate sordid battle of Batoche."

Batoche District."[824] It is true that as early as 1961, the museum at Batoche had devoted part of its exhibit to the history of the Métis.[825] In 1972, another Parks plan for Batoche had emphasized that it wished visitors to "…think of the story and the action from the Métis point of view."[826] The themes framework of the 1980s document was therefore a change of degree, rather than of kind. Parks had long accepted the importance of the Métis story, but public feedback to the 1980 plan showed just how accepting Canadians were of this approach. In August, Parks published the feedback from the public. Respondents stressed the importance "…of telling both sides of the story of the Rebellion, that is, from the Métis as well as the Military viewpoint", as well as "the need to examine and interpret the Métis way of life before, during and after the Rebellion".[827] Last but not least, "…a great many people stressed the necessity of consulting with the Métis and Indian people in planning for Batoche, and expressed their support for the public participation program."[828]

Parks Canada was now committed to sharing "both sides of the story," and allowing Indigenous voices input into how those stories were told. Among the English-Canadian public, interest had shifted almost completely –the focus was now on the Métis and First Nations side of the story. This did not mean that Indigenous veterans of the conflict gained the stature that had once been accorded to the volunteers and the NWMP. Public attention seemed to focus on the larger-than-life Indigenous leaders of 1885. First and foremost was Riel, who cast a long shadow. Almost as prominent was his general, Gabriel Dumont. Poundmaker, Big Bear and other First Nations chiefs would occasionally make an appearance as heroic representatives of a lost cause.[829] Meanwhile, the rank-and-file who fought under Dumont, Fine Day and Wandering Spirit remained shrouded in anonymity. The only thing that had changed was that the Canadian militia veterans had now joined them in obscurity.

Many of the monuments to the Canadian militia veterans of 1885 now lie crumbling and forgotten. The statues are largely overlooked by the public, although sometimes they still

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[824] *Batoche National Historical Site: Help Write Its Future* (Parks Canada, January 1980), 2, in Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum, North West Field Force, Box 3.
[825] McCullough, "Parks Canada and the 1885 Rebellion/Uprising/Resistance," 450.
[826] As quoted in McCullough, 452.
[827] *Batoche National Historic Site: Public Comment on the Themes and Objectives* (Parks Canada August 1980), 1, in Royal Winnipeg Rifles Museum, North West Field Force, Box 3.
[828] Ibid.
[829] Margaret Hogan, "The echo of battle cries on a Saskatchewan hilltop," *The Globe and Mail*, 31 May 1986, E5.

become a locus for historical debate. In 2009, the statue commemorating Alex Watson in St. Catharines became a centre for controversy when the city's culture department suggested that it might be time to move or destroy the memorial, because it "could be perceived as a symbol of animosity towards past First Nations of Canada." It is worth noting that representatives of the Niagara Region Métis Council disagreed with this suggestion.[830] Just before these events, scholars Russell Johnston and Michael Ripmeester surveyed 162 individuals in St. Catharines about the Watson monument. While the vast majority did not know the original purpose of the monument, many still felt it was an important part of the city, with the soldier representing "…sacrifice, honour, dedication and a model for citizenry."[831] The Watson monument is not alone in having its meaning shifted away from the veterans of 1885. In Toronto's Queens Park, an even more dramatic shift took place. The Métis National Council actually commemorated Riel Day 2011 by gathering in front of the 1885 soldiers' memorial to lay a wreath in memory Riel himself – certainly not something the builders of this monument would have ever expected to see.[832]

Historian Peter Burke identifies three central questions for historians of social memory: "First, what are the modes of transmission for public memory and how have these memories changed over time? Second, what are the uses of these memories, the uses of the past and how have these uses changed? Third, what are the uses of oblivion?"[833] These three questions all have interesting answers when we look at the example of the veterans of 1885. Perhaps most intriguing are the uses of oblivion. For Louis Riel to become a hero in the imagination of English Canadians, many things had to happen. The nation needed to sever its British connection and develop a more multicultural society. Perceptions of First Nations and Métis peoples had to become less overtly colonial. First, however, the men of the Northwest Field Force had to die. Only then could Louis Riel live again. Of course, if Riel was the hero, were Canadian militia soldiers the villains? The English-Canadian public, long accustomed to celebrating those who serve their country militarily, did not go so far as to demonize the members of the Northwest Field Force. Instead, they were simply forgotten; the old soldiers

[830] Monique Beech, "Decaying Statue Stirs Debate," *St. Catharines Standard*, Monday, 16 November 2009 (http://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/2009/11/16/decaying-statue-stirs-debate).
[831] Russell Johnson & Michael Ripmeester, "A Monument's Work is Never Done," 129.
[832] "Louis Riel Day," Metis National Council, http://www.metisnation.ca/index.php/news/louis-riel-day.
[833] Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 44.

marched into the mists of Burke's oblivion. The Indigenous and Métis veterans who opposed the Canadian government, meanwhile, never really fully entered the English-Canadian consciousness, always trailing in the wake of the newly heroic Riel and his general Dumont. By the end of the twentieth century, there was far more sympathy for the Indigenous cause than ever before, but it was still only in the heartland of the 1885 conflict, in Métis and First Nations communities, that Indigenous veterans continued to be actively remembered as heroes and defenders of their people's rights.

## Conclusion

In July of 2010, three large stone blocks were installed as part of the gate at Batoche cemetery. A short text was inscribed on the blocks. On each stone, the text was the same, but written in a different language – when entering the graveyard, from left to right, the first stone read in French, the second in Michif, and the third in English:

> In spirit we reconcile / on this day of July 18, 2010 / As we honour those who lost their lives in the 1885 North West Resistance / We the Metis, died for / Our home and our land / We, the soldiers died for Canada / Died for Canada /We, the First Nations / Died for our Metis brothers and sisters / We are now forever free.[834]

More than 125 years after the 1885 conflict, and 86 years after the Canadian government's first attempt at commemorating veterans at Batoche, some sort synthesis had been achieved. There was finally a text at the site that acknowledged each community of veterans on their own terms.


Figure 29: Two of the three memorial stones at Batoche graveyard. Photo by the author.

This new memorial does not mean that all 1885 veterans are now commemorated equally at Batoche. For the Métis people, Batoche remains one of Canada's most important sites of memory. This is strongly reflected in the primacy of the Métis narrative of 1885 in the monuments and memorials located there. What is more, Batoche continues to build on its

[834] Gates to Batoche cemetery, Batoche National Historic Site.

significance as a site of memory for the 1885 conflict, layering new meaning onto this foundation. In July of 2014, another monument was unveiled at Batoche honouring Métis veterans. This memorial commemorates veterans who served Canada in the wars of the twentieth century – The First World War, the Second World War and Korea. In attendance at the unveiling were not only leaders of Canada's Métis community, but also Canada's Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, along with both the local Member of Parliament and the local member of the Legislature.[835]

Speaking to reporters after the unveiling, Robert Doucette, the president of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, noted that the monument would also feature the names of veterans of the 1885 conflict, stating: "We built the only Métis veterans monument that will have all the names of the Métis veterans that fought in 1885, World War 1, World War II, Korea."[836] Since the memorial's unveiling in 2014, the names of over 5,000 Métis veterans have been inscribed, including those of 474 Métis who participated in 1885. Even Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont are among those inscribed.[837] The Gabriel Dumont Institute, which has inscribed the names, claims that those Métis who served in the South African War of 1899-1903 are also commemorated, although none of the names on the monument are those of individuals who served in that conflict. It is perhaps unsurprising if few Métis volunteered to serve in South Africa, since they would be fighting against the Boers, a people whose struggle against an Imperial power bore striking similarities to the plight of the Métis. In any case, names on the memorial are simply listed with no details such as rank or time served. As a result, there is no way of distinguishing veterans of one war from another – on the monument they are all equal. This is particularly significant for the veterans of 1885.[838] The implied meaning of this approach is that all Métis soldiers are deserving of recognition and commemoration, regardless of whether they fought for

[835] "Metis Veterans Monument Unveiled at Batoche," 15 July 2014, Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, https://gdins.org/metis-veterans-monument-unveiled-at-batoche/ (accessed 12 November 2017).
[836] Amber Rockliffe, "Métis veterans honoured with monument at Back to Batoche Days," 21 July 2014, Global News, https://globalnews.ca/news/1462555/metis-veterans-honoured-with-monument-at-back-to-batoche-days/ (accessed 12 November 2017).
[837] List of Names on Métis Veterans' Memorial Monument with First and Last Name Separated – 8 August 2016, Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, https://gdins.org/me/uploads/2017/09/List-with-First-and-Last-Name-separated-August-8-2016.pdf (accessed 12 November 2017).
[838] Column Photos, Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, https://gdins.org/me/uploads/2016/08/Metis-Veterans-Memorial-Monument-Column-Photos-LR.pdf (accessed 12 November 2017).

or against the Canadian government. The Métis veterans' monument is another testament to the tenacity of the Métis narrative of 1885.

First Nations peoples have also sought to share their story, and have become increasingly public in doing so at other 1885 historic sites. In 1993, First Nations leaders unveiled a plaque dedicated to Chief Big Bear on the Poundmaker Reserve in Saskatchewan. The text of the plaque unequivocally absolved Chief Big Bear of any complicity in the Frog Lake Massacre and feted him as a hero for present-day First Nations:

> Big Bear stands tall in the memory of the Cree Nation, a proud and truly visionary leader who fought against the forces of Canadian colonialism and ultimately suffered for his Nation.[839]

The "nation" referred to is not Canada, but the Cree Nation. These bold words are a notable change from the apologist language of Edward Ahenakew forty years earlier. Instead of confirming Canadian identity, the 1885 conflict was now being used to support and underscore an Indigenous identity that was separate from, if not in opposition to, Canadian identity. Just as with the Métis, in many First Nations communities, a narrative of heoric1885 veterans fighting against Canadians has not just survived – it has thrived.

The Canadian militia veterans' narrative, by contrast, has all but disappeared from English-Canadian collective memory. It still exists in the form of obscure monuments, regimental dinners and in military histories, but it no longer holds pride of place in public discourse. There are no Remembrance Day ceremonies for Canadian soldiers who served in the 1885 conflict, and the Canadian militia who died fighting in 1885 are not commemorated in any of the Books of Remembrance located on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.[840]

Similarly, the veterans who chose to serve Canada during the events of 1869-70 have also faded from collective memory. While martyrs to the Métis cause such as Elzear Goulet now have parks named after them, Canadian martyr Thomas Scott is no longer celebrated. His Orange Hall has long since been abandoned by the Order, and now serves as an antique shop, barely noticeable in downtown Winnipeg's Exchange district.

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[839] "Poundmaker Monument Unveiled," *Saskatchewan Indian*, July 1993, v. 22, no. 6, 11.
[840] Books of Remembrance, Veterans Affairs Canada, http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/memorials/books (accessed 13 November 2017).

Some sites of public memory are moving further away from the subjective and specific, towards the objective and holistic. A fascinating memorialization connected to the events of 1869-70 is the recently revitalized Upper Fort Garry Provincial Park. Upper Fort Garry was the headquarters of Louis Riel's provisional government in 1869-70, and after the arrival of the Red River expedition, became a barracks for the Ontario Rifles while they were stationed in the new province of Manitoba. The new commemoration at the park does not celebrate the Canadian militia, and does not focus exclusively on the events of 1868-70. Instead, the park's interpretation tells a broader story of the site, from before contact until the present day. While many historic sites aim to interpret a specific year or even a specific date, Upper Fort Garry instead draws from many periods, with no particular emphasis on any one time.[841]

This approach is reflected in the interpretive panels. Rather than present a unified narrative, the developers maintained commemorative interpretive panels from previous eras, while adding new text that interprets these older commemorations (a panel entitled "Changing Perspectives / Points de vue changeants"). The panel advises the visitor that, in every era (including our own), the past is not simply a collection of facts, but a narrative built to serve the present:

> These carefully-planned statements illustrate that perceptions of history change over time and that significant differences of interpretation may have their origin in writer's distinctive vantage points.[842]

Of course, the Métis veterans' monument at Batoche and the Big Bear plaque at Poundmaker Reserve also share narratives built to serve the present of a particular memory community. What is different at Upper Fort Garry Provincial Park is the choice to acknowledge that commemoration is never a neutral act. Also striking is the evaporation of the Canadian militia narrative from a site that was long associated with the volunteers of 1869-70 and even of 1885. There is no celebration of the Red River expedition, or lamenting of Thomas Scott's execution. Instead, the panel notes that Indigenous people were left out of earlier interpretation and commemoration of the site.

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[841] Guide to Upper Fort Garry Provincial Park, http://www.upperfortgarry.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ufg_park_map.pdf (accessed 13 November 2017).
[842] "Changing Perspectives / Points de vue changeants," Plaque, Friends of Upper Fort Garry, Upper Fort Garry Provincial Park.

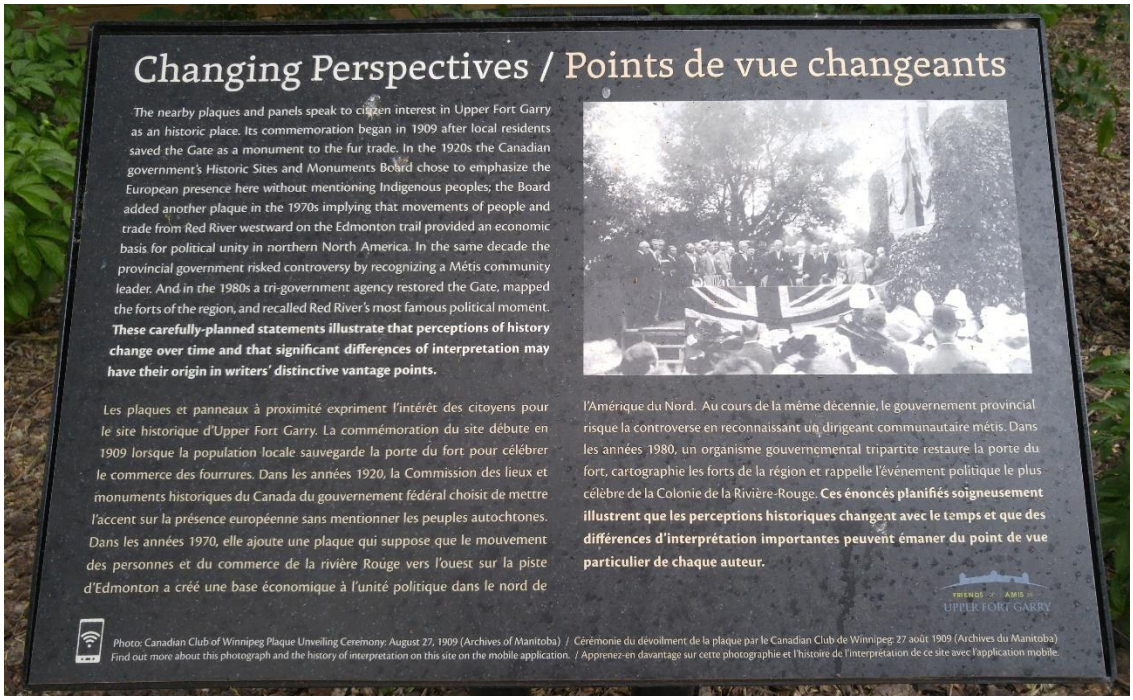


Figure 30: Interpretive Panel from Upper Fort Garry Provincial Park. Photo by the author.

And so, even in a city like Winnipeg, where civic, provincial, and business administration was once dominated by the veterans of the Red River expedition and their supporters, the Canadian volunteers' narrative is no longer presented as an uncomplicated heroes' story. If it is told at all, provisos are necessary – interpreters engage with issues of commemoration and collective memory, and discuss the erasure of Indigenous people from earlier commemoration.

For an individual watching the unveiling of the Winnipeg volunteers' monument in 1886, it would have been difficult to picture a day when the volunteers of 1885 would be largely forgotten. It would have even more difficult to picture a day when the volunteers' narrative would no longer be an uncomplicated story of patriotic duty and heroic sacrifice. Perhaps most difficult of all would have been to picture a day when the Indigenous narratives of 1869-70 and 1885 had become, if not dominant, more widely accepted than the volunteers' narrative. But to a large extent, this is what has happened.

The Canadian militia veterans are no longer the darlings of English Canada. Even when they are mentioned, their role in history is no longer a simply understood and accepted by the public imagination as the most important contribution. More Canadians are sympathetic to the

struggles of the Métis and First Nations peoples who faced the volunteers in both 1869-70 and 1885 – although this does not always equate to sympathy for present-day Indigenous peoples. Thomas King has noted that many white settler Canadians have a greater affinity for "dead Indians" than they do for "live Indians":

> Dead Indians are Garden of Eden-variety Indians. Pure, Noble, Innocent. Perfectly authentic. Jean-Jacques Rousseau Indians. Not a feather out of place. Live Indians are fallen Indians, modern, contemporary copies, not authentic Indians at all, Indians by biological association only.[843]

King's point is that non-Indigenous Canadians might be more sympathetic to the plight of First Nations and Métis people in the past, but they do not always connect this to the concerns of present-day Indigenous communities. Within those Indigenous communities, however, the Métis and First Nations veterans of 1885 link living community members to a heroic tradition, and reinforce Indigenous identities in the here and now. The narratives of Métis and First Nations veterans are perhaps stronger than ever before. Their stories are often presented without equivocation: They were heroes who fought for a just cause, defending their homes and their nations.

Canada's collective memory is always in a state of flux. The country has just celebrated 150 years since Confederation, and the state has attempted to celebrate the traditional nation-building narrative that has been developed over the past century and a half. At the same time, that narrative has been publicly and vocally challenged, especially by Indigenous peoples and their allies.[844] With the prominence of hashtags such as #Resistance150, an old question has arisen once again: what is more Canadian – peace, order and good government, or resistance and rebellion? The answer to this question depends, in large part, on how one sees the nation's past. The veterans of 1869-70 and 1885 provide us with several narratives with which to interpret the past. These narratives also show us several ways to understand the past's relationship with Canadian identity, as well as with the identities of some of the various subnationalisms found in this country.

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[843] Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian*, 64-65.

[844] Jackie Dunham, "Resistance 150: Why Canada's birthday celebrations aren't for everyone," 27 June 2015, CTV, News, http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/resistance-150-why-canada-s-birthday-celebrations-aren-t-for-everyone-1.3478004 (accessed 13 November 2017).

In the wake of the events of 1869-70 at Red River, at least two very different narratives were quickly established. English-Canadians tended to view those who had served the Canadian state as heroes and martyrs, while Riel was a villain and his followers were simple people who had been fooled by a charismatic demagogue. Among the Red River Métis, it was believed Riel and his provisional government had acted heroically, while Canadian soldiers and their supporters had instigated a reign of terror. Both these narratives would root themselves deeply in the consciousness of their respective communities for many years to come. Even after the 1885 conflict, Manitoba's Métis community would continue to see the 1869-70 crisis as a heroic struggle for their people, and declare that their actions were taken out of loyalty to the Crown and to Canada. In fact, the Red River Métis would often contrast 1869-70 to 1885, casting the former as divinely-sanctioned and the second as unlawful and heretical.

By 1885, when Saskatchewan's South Branch Métis felt their concerns were being disregarded by the federal government, their collective memory of the events at Red River was strong enough that they immediately thought to invite Louis Riel to assist them. At the same time, in much of English Canada, Riel was almost immediately perceived as a villain who would encourage First Nations peoples to rebel against the federal government. These attitudes were very much in keeping with the English-Canadian narrative of the 1869-70 conflict.

In English Canada, the 1885 conflict saw an outpouring of patriotism and support for Canada's citizen soldiers, who were presented in the media as exemplars of British-Canadian manliness who could subdue the "uncivilized" Northwest and restore order to Canada. In the wake of the conflict, there were monuments, medals and even musicals created to honour Canada's soldiers. Canadian militia veterans eagerly participated in creating sites of memory and celebrating their service to the country, with the full support of the English-Canadian elites. Indigenous peoples, meanwhile, were unable to focus on commemoration in the aftermath of the 1885 conflict – their energy was often focused instead on survival. This did not mean that Métis and First Nations peoples did not create their own narrative of 1885. It was a narrative that slowly began to appear at sites of memory such as Batoche, as well as in the writings of individuals such as Edward Ahenakew.

For many years, Indigenous narratives of 1885 hid in the shadows while English-Canadian collective memory celebrated the militia volunteers and their heroism. In the 1920s,

when the federal government attempted to commemorate the volunteers' narrative at Batoche and other 1885 battle sites, Métis and First Nations people pushed back, asserting their own understanding of events. The HSMBC proved unable to reconcile their understanding of the past with Indigenous collective memory, and eventually abandoned further efforts to commemorate 1885 in the heartland of the conflict. In the rest of English Canada, however, Canadian militia veterans continued to celebrate their narratives largely unchallenged. It was only in areas such as Northern Saskatchewan, where there were large numbers of Métis and Indigenous veterans of 1885, that English Canadians were willing to accommodate – at least somewhat – divergent narratives.

As the last veterans of 1885 passed away the stage was being set for a transformation in how English-Canadians perceived both the 1869-70 and the 1885 conflicts. With the Canadian militia veterans gone, there was no longer anyone to champion the volunteers' narrative to the wider public. As Canadian society became increasingly multicultural and attitudes towards Indigenous peoples became less overtly antagonistic, space opened up for other narratives to fill the Canadian consciousness. By the 1970s, English-Canadian poets could write with open sympathy about the lost cause of the Métis, and a CBC-produced film made in large part for English-Canadian audiences could celebrate Riel and his compatriots as heroes, while portraying Thomas Scott and his supporters as villainous bigots.

It is important to note that unlike Scott, most Canadian soldiers from 1869-70 and 1885 did not become villains in the eyes of the English-Canadian public. Instead, they simply disappeared from collective memory. This might be in part because Canadians today still valourize military service. To slander soldiers who have served their country – even if the cause they fought for no longer seems just – is an uncomfortable act for many. It is easier to forget, and so the Canadian militia veterans of 1869-70 and 1885 have marched into obscurity, to exist alongside the Métis and Indigenous veterans of those two conflicts.

At the same time, Indigenous peoples have not been satisfied to see their veterans marginalized by history. Dumont, Poundmaker, Big Bear and their soldiers are all still relevant to the Indigenous present – and there is still a strong desire to commemorate Indigenous veterans and have their sacrifice recognized by wider society. Outside the heartlands of 1869-70 and 1885, Indigenous narratives are more prevalent than ever before but rank-and-file Métis and First

Nations veterans have still not been transformed into pan-Canadian heroes. They have not been lionized in the same way as the volunteers were following 1885.

What is more, it would also be a mistake to declare the Canadian militia veterans of 1885 permanently lost in the mists of memory. There are segments of Canadian society for whom these veterans are still relevant – particularly within Canadian military communities. One case in point is the story of the "Bell of Batoche." In 2013, a Métis man admitted he had stolen a bell from the Millbrook legion in Ontario in 1991. He believed it was the bell of Batoche Church, taken as a war trophy by Canadian troops, and wanted to return it to his people. The Millbrook legion announced that it would not press charges, declaring that "the bell is back where it rightfully belongs." At the same time, Legion representatives did request the return of three 1885 service medals that were stolen along with the bell:

> Known as the McCorry medals after Millbrook man and former sergeant Fred McCorry, they had been presented to residents who were soldiers in the campaign to suppress the Northwest Rebellion. Those medals belong in Millbrook [legion representative] Maebrae said. "They're part of the legion history. This man was a military man and it's military history. That's what the legion is about.[845]

The sentiments expressed by Maebrae are very similar to those shared by many of the 1885 veterans who, over the years after the conflict, wrote requesting replacement medals. But it is not only in the military that memory of the Canadian militia veterans are still alive. There are elements of the veterans' narrative that still resonate with the wider English Canadian public today. Artist Chester Brown's 2003 graphic novel *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* tells the story of 1869-70 and 1885 in a relatively dispassionate voice, but is still sympathetic to the Métis. Brown is especially critical of John A. Macdonald, who is portrayed as deliberately provoking rebellion in order to save his political career and secure support for completing the Canadian Pacific Railway.[846] The volunteers, however, are portrayed as common sense and capable. Just as in the 1979 film *Riel*, it is the volunteers who take the initiative and charge the Métis lines, thereby winning the battle of Batoche.[847] It is true that an unsanctioned Canadian charge ended the Battle of Batoche. Nonetheless, it is interesting that both Brown and the *Riel*

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[845] "Ontario Legion happy Métis have Bell of Batoche but wants medals back," *Toronto Star*, 5 August 2013, https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/08/05/ontario_legion_happy_mtis_have_bell_of_batoche_but_wants_medals_returned.html (accessed November 21, 2017).
[846] Chester Brown, *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* (Montréal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2003), 136-137.
[847] Ibid, 194.

film, despite generally sympathizing with Riel and the Métis, choose to portray the charge as a moment of Canadian accomplishment. In both the film and the graphic novel, the charge shows rank-and-file Canadian soldiers in a somewhat sympathetic light, even though their action result in the defeat of the story's protagonists. Also worth noting is that in Brown's version of events, it is the Canadian volunteers, not the Métis, who are being fooled by duplicitous leaders – in this case, Prime Minister Macdonald and his co-conspirators, who are using them to complete the railway.

Chester Brown's decision to sympathize with the Métis, while simultaneously refusing to portray the Canadian militia as outright villains, speaks to the resilience of the volunteer narrative. It also speaks to another memory that has existed alongside both the Indigenous and volunteer narratives. This third narrative celebrated the service of Canadian militia veterans in the conflicts of 1869-70 and 1885, but also acknowledged the resistance of Indigenous peoples as justified and heroic in its own right. Colonel George Denison shared glimpses of this narrative while participating in the 1885 campaign, writing letters home that expressed sympathy for Indigenous people and their plight.[848] He also noted in his memoirs that although he felt compelled to serve, and was proud of the volunteers' achievements, he still felt that those accomplishments had been exaggerated by the wider public and the volunteers themselves.[849] It was this narrative that journalist Howard Angus Kennedy was drawing upon when he asked officials to take a "common-sense" approach to commemoration at Batoche – and approach that honoured and respected both Canadian soldiers and the Métis. This narrative was also seen after 1885 in white settler communities in Saskatchewan, where Indigenous people often participated in commemoration activities. It was this narrative expressed when old-timer R.W. Caswell spoke at a 1945 reunion in Saskatoon, proclaiming that there was "right and wrong on both sides."[850] By 1952, at the unveiling of the Cut Knife Hill monument, even official culture had, to some extent, adopted this blended narrative. At the unveiling, HSMBC member Campbell Innes

[848] Letter, Geo. T. Denison (Humboldt) to W.A. Foster (Toronto), 17 June 1885, Foster Papers: Personal Letters, MU1058, F70, Archives of Ontario, 2-3.
[849] Denison, *Soldiering in Canada*, 265-266.
[850] "First Shot of Rebellion Accidental," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, July 25, 1945, 3.

declared the memorial would allow all "…to gain a greater understanding of the ideals of our kindred races to praise and glorify Canada."[851]

In the present, this traces of narrative can still be found in monuments such as Elzear Goulet Park, and at the gates of Batoche Cemetery, where there are attempts to reconcile the two sides of these conflicts. Rather than presenting simply a single narrative, both these sites of memory intertwine divergent narratives, and attempt to bridge the chasm between conflicting collective memories. Like Upper Fort Garry Provincial Park, these memorials do not really tell visitors what the past is. Instead, they attempt to open up a dialogue about how we see the past, and ask us to consider whether some understanding between opposing narratives can be achieved. Myrna Kotash has commented on this process at the site of the Frog Lake Massacre, where there have been two competing narratives, one primarily sympathetic to the mostly white settler victims of the massacre, and one desirous to contextualize the massacre with suffering of First Nations. Kotash argues that even as one narrative has faded and another has become more widely accepted, a process of synthesis has begun at Frog Lake: "Gradually, the one has yielded to the other, or, rather, the two have come to overlap or intersect in complex relationships of perspective, memory, rights, and politics."[852] The genesis of this overlap goes all the way back to the events of 1885, but it appears to be more prominent in recent times. This is likely in part because Canadians are attempting to reconcile a continuing desire to acknowledge military service with a more nuanced understanding of Indigenous peoples and their struggles.

I previously noted that someone living in English-Canada in 1885 ago would be surprised to see how collective memory on 1869-70 and 1885 has shifted over the last 130 years. This author is certain that if we traveled another 130 years into the future, we would find that collective memory of these events had shifted once again. It is impossible to predict how it will shift, and which narrative – if any – will prove most popular. It is unlikely, though, that these various narratives will disappear entirely. As Robert Gildea notes, shifting perspectives and new vocabulary have not tended to separate memory communities from their past. Instead, "they have prompted a reshaping of their collective memory, in order to preserve or regain legitimacy, lest that vital element conferred by the past be lost to them for good."[853]

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[851] Campbell Innes speech, in A113, Innes Papers, IV. Mounted Police Memorial and Indian Museum, (a) Subject Files, 8. Cut Knife Program, November 2, 1952, Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.
[852] Myrna Kotash, *The Frog Lake Reader*, 182-183.
[853] Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History*, 344.

The story of the veterans of 1869-70 and 1885 is a fascinating case study of how various memory communities attempted to weave narratives that were both supported by and supportive of particular local and national identities. It also is a testament to both the durability of personal memory and the malleability of collective memory. The veterans' narratives permit us to look into the complex set of symbols and signifiers that are used to create identity. It also allows us to better understand the shifting nature of Canadian identity, and who has been included in – or left out – of that identity. As Canada's national and subnational identities continue to evolve, it seems inevitable that the veterans will once again find themselves on the front lines of debates about our nation's past. They will fight their battles over and over again – but they will no longer fight for their own cause. Their narratives have been recruited to serve the needs of the eternal present.

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