

**The Many Worlds of Louis Riel: A Political Odyssey from  
Red River to Montreal and back 1840-1875**

**M. Max Hamon**

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Department of History and Classical Studies  
Faculty of Arts  
McGill University  
Montreal, Quebec

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation is the product of fruitful new archival research into the life of Louis Riel, one of the best-known figures in Canadian history. His leadership of an armed Resistance in Red River in 1869, and his involvement in the violent events of 1885, which ultimately led to his execution, changed the course and definition of the Canadian state. New documents and new approaches to previously identified records overturn earlier interpretations of his life. This intellectual biography tracks Riel's life across several "worlds," Indigenous and non-Indigenous, that Riel occupied over the course of his life and considers his formative years through four key themes: family, education, political culture, and networking. The tensions and pressures between these worlds allowed Riel to develop the cultural expertise necessary to challenge Canadian state hegemony. The choice to end the biography in 1875, rather than with his death in 1885, affords an opportunity to present new arguments about the impact of his life. Using the cultural capital, social networks, and an intellectual "toolkit" he acquired over the course of his early years, Riel proposed a Confederation that would defend and represent the interests of the Métis.

## **Résumé**

Le résultat d'une recherche archivistique fructueuse, cette thèse propose une nouvelle interprétation de la vie de Louis Riel, chef métis et figure incontournable de l'histoire canadienne. À la tête de la résistance des métis de la rivière Rouge en 1869 et de la confrontation violente qui a mené à son exécution à la Saskatchewan en 1885, Riel a changé le parcours et la définition de l'État canadien. À la suite d'un dépouillement de sources inusitées, et l'élaboration de nouvelles démarches historiques, nous proposons un nouveau regard sur sa vie et son œuvre. Cette biographie intellectuelle explore les espaces sociaux – soit autochtone et non autochtone – que Riel a su occuper lors de sa vie. Elle considère également ses années formatrices par le biais de quatre grands thèmes : la famille, l'éducation, la culture politique et le réseautage. En reconnaissant les tensions et les conflits entre ces « espaces », Riel a mis à l'épreuve l'hégémonie de l'État canadien. En terminant cette thèse en 1875 plutôt qu'avec sa mort en 1885, nous abordons de nouvelles problématiques concernant son influence et l'impact de ses actions. Son capital culturel, son réseau social, et les outils intellectuels qu'il a acquis lors de son cheminement personnel, a permis à Riel de proposer une vision de la Confédération canadienne qui reflète les intérêts du peuple métis.



## Table of Contents

Abstract/Résumé	iii
Table of Contents	v
Acknowledgements	vii
List of Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 <b>The Riel Lagimodière Family</b>	31
Chapter 2 <b>Riel at School: Sulpician Governance, Sulpician Capital</b>	111
Chapter 3 <b>The Transformation of the Red River Public Sphere</b>	187
Chapter 4 <b>The Amnesty Campaign: A network approach to Confederation</b>	261
Conclusion	341
Appendix <i>Plaidoyer sur l'influence des sciences et arts sur la société</i>	351
Bibliography	367



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Thank-you to everyone!



## **List of Abbreviations**

APSSM – Archives des Prêtres de Saint-Sulpice de Montréal

BANQ – Bibliothèque et Archives Nationale de Quebec

CWLR – *Collected Works of Louis Riel*. Edited by George Stanley et al. 5 volumes. Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1985.

DCB – Dictionary of Canadian Biography

LAC – Library and Archives Canada

MMA – McCord Museum Archives

PAM – Provincial Archives of Manitoba

SHSB – Société Historique de Saint Boniface



## Introduction

*Louis David Riel born at St. Boniface Oct 23, 1844,<sup>1</sup> in the morning of a beautiful day, and went to confession at seven years old, according to the good advice of the Catholic Church. The Rev. Father [Raymond] was my first confessor, and after my confession gave me a lot of maple sugar, which pleased me greatly.<sup>2</sup>*

Louis Riel made these autobiographical notes in 1885. Written largely in the third person, they hint at his own sense of the forces that animated his life; this was an era of converging worlds.

While the buffalo hunt was declining, increasing numbers of Indigenous peoples, as well as Canadian and American settlers, were taking up permanent homes along the Red River. First and foremost, what follows is a story of colonization. This is not such a banal suggestion as it might seem after decades of historical critique; Riel's story is not a simple question of domination and resistance, neither is it one of cultural assimilation. Colonialism defined and subordinated people through the institutionalization of ideas of difference, but individuals like Riel were able to cut across and run athwart the lines of empire.

His was a life of remarkable mobility. By running across the lines of influence emanating from Montreal, a metropolitan centre, to the Northwest Plains, or even reversing that influence, Riel shook up imperial notions of power.<sup>3</sup> Riel was born in St. Boniface, but he went to school in Montreal. He gave public speeches in Winnipeg and wrote for newspapers in Montreal. Riel claimed British rights even while he challenged Canadian national sovereignty. Riel opposed a Fenian invasion but, when exiled from Canada, sought refuge and resided in the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> George Stanley, based upon the notes left by Riel's sister Henriette Riel, asserts that Riel was born on the 22 at 10:00 am, and baptised the same day at 4:00. Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 3.

<sup>2</sup> "Autobiographical notes," docs. #3-147, 148 & 149 Louis Riel, *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, ed. George Stanley and Thomas Flanagan, vol. 3 (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 259–65. Hereafter referred to as *CWLR*. The original was published in the *Globe* (Toronto) 17 November 1885. The quotes used throughout this thesis contain grammatical and spelling inconsistencies and errors. In general, I have left them as in the original without marking them with a [sic] or [!]. In some cases, I have added explanatory notes or, where necessary, have indicated that the error is in the original text with a [!].

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Metropole and Colony," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Fredrick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1–38.

This mobility empowered Riel to contest the political and cultural boundaries imagined by Canada's nation founders. Riel did not merely move between the Northeast and the Northwest, between Canada and the United States; he brought these worlds together. Travelling across and through these series of interactions gave Riel an awareness which allowed him to slip with relative ease across cultural borders and seize the moment of encounter as an opportunity to transform culture into political currency.

Riel also participated in creating and shifting the Canadian state. Louis Riel did not simply resist Confederation, he shaped it. His encounter with Canada was dialogic rather than didactic, involving multiple perspectives and considerable negotiation.<sup>4</sup> The goal of this biography, which embraces a transnational approach, is not to dismiss the nation, but rather to see how it constructed some forms of authority and suppressed others. In this story, Riel participated in the process of nation-building, even as he was marginalized by it. The Red River Resistance was seen by Riel in the context of growing political responsibility and independence.

This thesis presents two main arguments. The first is that Louis Riel participated in crafting a new political environment in British North America despite the power imbalance. As a possessor of significant cultural capital that had currency in both Canadian and Métis worlds, he was well placed to play a role in the political transformation of the Northwest and Canada. The second claim is that Riel attempted to integrate Métis (and more broadly Indigenous) perspectives and Canadian (French and English) perspectives in his project. Riel translated between these worlds and frequently had to respond creatively to the novel situations created by

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<sup>4</sup> Neylan explores the dialogic interaction between "spiritual specialists" according to three approaches: syncretism, convergence and dualism. Susan Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 15. For an extended discussion of the problems related to studying religion in empire see Elizabeth Elbourne *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 13-21.

the new contexts shaped by convergence. It was his versatility with cultural encounters and his ability to transform this process into political significance that has left its mark on Métis, Canadian, and, more broadly, North American history.

Covering the years from 1840 to 1875, this dissertation spans two generations and offers analysis of the political and social influence of his parents and Riel's early manhood. While the Red River Resistance (1869-70) and the "Rebellion" of 1885, are normally at the centre of any narrative about Riel, this dissertation attempts to shift the focus away from the framework of "resistance." De-centring Riel from the Resistance and "Rebellion" offers a new way to understand Canadian Confederation. The dissertation begins in 1840 by exploring how Jean-Louis Riel (his father)<sup>5</sup> moved from resistance to an alliance with state authority in Red River. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Métis were increasingly involved with, rather than marginalized by, the colonial state. The thesis next evaluates Riel's education in Montreal where he attended a Catholic boy's college from 1858 to 1864. Louis Riel joined a cohort of young men who were being vetted by the French-Catholic cultural elite to reproduce the cultural capital necessary to maintain the social structures of French Canada. Discussion of his education illustrates how French-Canadian cultural capital played a critical part in shaping the authority that made him into a state-builder. The third section of the thesis moves back to Red River to re-examine the events of 1869-70 in light of these wider arguments. It shifts the focus from the drama of physical force to an examination of the public sphere in an effort to address issues of opinion making and consensus forming. It argues that Riel's public authority was founded on his ability to employ the mediums of communication expected by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples. This weaving together of these worlds required an adept in the cultural encounter

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<sup>5</sup> In this dissertation, I distinguish between father and son, who are both called "Louis" in the documentation, as Jean-Louis and Louis, respectively, for clarity's sake.

between the Northwest and Canada. This was a field of expertise where politicians in Ottawa, because of their ignorance of the local political culture, were remarkably lacking. Riel demonstrated, contrary to beliefs at the time, that Indigenous opinions could make a difference in the contest to formulate the consensus necessary for state hegemony.<sup>6</sup> The final section of the thesis examines the way Riel used networks between 1870 and 1875 to hijack the Confederation project to argue for political amnesty. Through his networking Riel would transform the worlds in which he travelled. While the Resistance is the lynchpin of these stories, his merging of worlds is the principal driving force.

This biography of Riel builds upon the work that has come before. In order to bring the new perspectives of transnational and indigenous studies to bear upon Riel, it returns to archives already used by biographers of Riel, the Library and Archives Canada, the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, and the Saint Boniface Historical Association. A transnational approach was arrived at through access to archives for the Collège de Montréal at the Sulpician Seminary, the McCord Museum Archives, the Bibliothèque et Archives Nationale de Québec, and the Archives at the Chancery Office of the Archdiocese of Montreal. Archives in the United States have also been used: the Minnesota Historical Association archives in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the North Dakota Historical Association archives in Bismark, North Dakota.

This dissertation offers important new archival findings. It presents original archival research on the life of his father Jean-Louis Riel. It also collects together for the first time in a comprehensive manner the facts relating to details of his mother Julie Lagimodière. Through

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<sup>6</sup> The literature on hegemony in Canada is voluminous. Here I refer to the process of creating the necessary political consensus from the bottom up. My model in considering this problem has been Donald Fyson, *Magistrates, Police and People: Everyday Criminal Justice in Quebec and Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), and Elsbeth Heaman *The Inglorious Arts of Peace: Exhibitions in Canadian Society during the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

reading the Quarterly Court records, I have also found Riel's first appearance in public in the Red River courts at age 10.<sup>7</sup> My research at the college archives has also revealed new manuscripts of Riel's poetry. The most significant finding at this archive was an important discourse on "The Influence of the Arts and Sciences" that he presented at the school's annual awards ceremony.<sup>8</sup> A thorough examination of these archives has also revealed that Riel was involved in student associations.<sup>9</sup> My research at the Minnesota Historical Association archives has unearthed new copies of the *Memorial and Petition of the People of Rupert's Land*, they demonstrate that Riel was not the author.<sup>10</sup> Research at this archive has also discovered new documentation regarding Riel's father's petitions to the American Government. Finally, my reconstruction of Riel's correspondence network links the correspondence in Manitoba and Montreal. This, an extension of George Stanley's work, presents new correspondence between Riel's friends regarding the Amnesty. Reading the Montreal newspapers between 1870-74, expands and overturns aspects of Arthur Silver's *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation*<sup>11</sup> by demonstrating Riel's active role in the battle for public opinion.

This biography tracks Riel's life across several worlds and through four key themes: family, education, political culture, and networking. In contrast to previous "regional" studies, initiated by Stanley and Morton, it links together the histories of the Northeast and the

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<sup>7</sup> Dale Gibson has also reported this in his recent publication, see *Law, Life and Governance at Red River: General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia Annotated Records, 1844-1872*, volume 2 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 423-25.

<sup>8</sup> "Plaidoyer sur l'influence des sciences et arts sur la société," Collège de Montréal Fonds I2: 6.3.3-3 6/6, Archives des Prêtres de Saint Sulpice de Montréal (hereafter APSSM). The document was obscured by multiple levels of archives and was only discovered by triangulating my research in the archives with my reading of contemporary newspapers, as described in my article. Max Hamon, "Contesting Civilization: Louis Riel's Defence of Culture at the Collège de Montréal," *Canadian Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (March 2016): 59-87.

<sup>9</sup> Collège de Montréal Fonds, I2: 7.5, APSSM.

<sup>10</sup> Miscellaneous Pamphlets E151.R35 Ramsay Fonds v. 25:26, Minnesota Historical Association.

<sup>11</sup> Arthur Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

Northwest. Placing his life in a transnational context suggested by recent critiques, it illustrates how Riel's mobility, and being "at home with empire," was key to his political career.<sup>12</sup> Through an examination of his schooling and his networking, this biography challenges the religious and psychological studies of Flanagan and Martel to suggest that Riel was connected to, rather than disconnected from, the worlds which he encountered. Archival research and historical analysis of schooling by Bruce Curtis and Ollivier Hubert in Montreal has been used to illustrate in greater detail the nature of his education in Montreal.<sup>13</sup> Also useful has been the recent work by Michel Hogue, Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny and Brenda Macdougall with respect to Métis community formation.<sup>14</sup> This dissertation shows that Riel translated these cultural and social processes into political strategies that were at the heart of his statecraft.

Using cultural capital, social networks, and an intellectual toolkit informed by multiple worlds, Riel envisioned an institution that would defend and represent the interests of the Métis. In so doing Riel acted as a cultural broker bringing Métis understandings of politics to Canadian political situations and vice versa. Riel's efforts to defend the interests of his people fit into a pattern well established in the negotiations for Confederation, and this was something that politicians were forced to recognize in 1874. Riel's early successes suggest that his execution in 1885 was not a sign of his own failure, but of Confederation. Under the influence of a powerful

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<sup>12</sup> As recent studies of empire show there were a multiplicity of ways of being "at home with empire." See Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, *At Home with Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> See especially Hubert's essays in *Le Collège Classique pour garçons: études historiques sur une institution Québécoise disparue*, ed. Louise Bienvenue and Christine Hudon (Montreal: Fides, 2014); Bruce Curtis, *Ruling by Schooling Quebec: Conquest to Liberal Governmentality - A Historical Sociology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015). Brenda Macdougall and Carolyn Podruchny, "Scuttling along the Spider's Web: Mobility and Kinship in Métis Ethnogenesis," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 59–92. Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); Nicole St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities, 1850-1914* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2004).



racial discourse about civilization, the “founding fathers” were prevented from understanding the necessity for accommodating the interests of Indigenous Peoples.

The dissertation covers a wide geographical space, but focuses mainly upon the settlements and parishes established along the Red River near Fort Garry, and the city of Montreal. These geographic locations are not narrowly defined. The term “Northwest” refers to the British territory north and west of the Great Lakes. As for Red River, the “Settlement” was concentrated but farms were stretched along the river. In the 1850s, the boundaries of what was “Montreal” were changing as the city expanded into the surrounding countryside. Most of Riel’s schooling took place in the urban centre near the Old Port and later at the “Priest’s Farm” in the west; however, Riel’s Montreal also included Mile End where his aunt resided. Outside of Montreal, Riel’s encounter with Quebec also included visits to Terrebonne and the Grey Nuns’ farm in Chateauguay.

The choice to end this dissertation in 1875, not with the end of his life which occurred in 1885 at the end of a rope,<sup>15</sup> reflects an effort to break up the narrative of rebellion/execution and to emphasize a period highlighting Riel’s success. The choice of ending, conscious or not, determines the story and which parts of his life to emphasize.<sup>16</sup> The year 1875 was the culmination of his successful career as a political leader. Riel still believed in his future in a way that complicates our understanding of his life and of Canada more generally. At this point, Riel had successfully brought Manitoba into Confederation and the issue of the amnesty had been

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<sup>15</sup> Riel was executed by the Canadian government on 16 november 1885. For the most recent study of this see J.R. Mumford, “Why was Louis Riel, a United States Citizen, Hanged as a Canadian Traitor in 1885?” *Canadian Historical Review* 88, no. 2 (2007): 237-262.

<sup>16</sup> Susan Zinsser writes of the Marquise du Châtelet (Voltaire’s lover), “As her biographer, I can choose the time, the place, when and where to begin a narrative. With these choices historians decide which aspects of an individual’s life and personality to expose, which part of her contemporary reputation to highlight.” *La Dame d’Esprit: A Biography of the Marquise du Châtelet*, (New York: Viking, 2006), 6.

resolved. He felt that his influence in the political circles of Manitoba and Quebec was outstanding and, while not everything was satisfactory, he believed in the success of his mission. This story ends not with the end of his life, but at a high point in his career. This story highlights Riel as a state founder rather than a rebel. This is not an “authoritative” biography, but as I argue, this approach offers a better horizon from which to reinvestigate Riel’s life from outside of the perspective of the nation.

### **The “Rebellion”**

As early as 1936 A.G. Morice suggested that the term “rebellion” was used to make an attractive newspaper headline.<sup>17</sup> And, many scholars since William Morton (1957) have noted that “Rebellion” follows a historical bias created by a historiography supporting Canada’s claims while delegitimizing the very process by which Manitoba became a province.<sup>18</sup> This dissertation uses the term “resistance” rather than rebellion to emphasize the fact that Riel’s actions in the Northwest were instigated against an invading foreign power that failed to establish a legitimate claim to the territory in the Northwest. Yet, the concept of “resistance,” if taken too far, is also problematic. Riel’s leadership of the political events has obscured the experiences and lives of others, but the bigger problem is that his role has been simplified. This was made clear to me on February 2016, as I watched a production of “Louis Riel a comic strip stage play” put on by Rustwerk theatre in Montreal. It was a galloping re-enactment of Chester Brown’s book *Louis Riel*. Fast-paced, hard-edged and with a clarity of purpose, it was invigorating. Brown’s comic strip re-invented the genre of graphic novels in 2001 in Canada, but told a story that many

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<sup>17</sup> A.G. Morice, *Critical History of The Red River Insurrection: after official documents and non-Catholic sources* (Winnipeg: Canadian Publishers, 1935).

<sup>18</sup> W. L. Morton (ed.), *Alexander Begg's Journal of the Red River Resistance and Other Documents* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1957), 10-12.

already knew: a plotting, drunken John A. Macdonald sets out to dispossess the Métis of their lands. The Métis resist, but are ultimately outgunned by imperialist forces and betrayed by the Catholic Church. Riel, their utopian and inspiring leader, is executed for his crimes and Canada becomes a nation. The puppet play brought to life this narrative, but further emphasized the flatness of the plot with two-dimensional cut-outs. The description of the play states, without awareness of the irony: “Louis Riel breathes in life-sized 2 dimensions, he mourns in shadow-imagery, and rallies his men in the voice of the actor. A piece of Canada’s history is sketched out on stage document by document, fort by fort, prayer by prayer, and battle by battle.”<sup>19</sup> The irony of this description flags the necessity of probing the black and white version of Riel’s life. In the search for clarity we lose depth. The dynamic sketches oversimplify the history and experience of a human figure, and by shining the spotlight on the cut-out, a shadow, larger than the figure itself, forms behind.

One might say Louis Riel did not make the Resistance. Rather the Resistance made Riel, and even that is not the whole truth.<sup>20</sup> Riel was not just about resistance, but, in its quest for hegemonic status the nation state has used Resistance, as a narrative framework, to define him. The play brings clarity to Homi Bhabha’s cryptic observation that “the liminality of the Western nation is the shadow of its own finitude.”<sup>21</sup> Such depictions of Riel reassert the dominant narrative of the nation state, even in their celebration of Riel’s resistance.<sup>22</sup> It is up to us to interrogate the usefulness of that narrative of resistance. Riel did not struggle against Canada, he

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<sup>19</sup> “Louis Riel” *Rustwerk Refinery*, URL: <http://www.rustwerk.ca/Plays/riel.html>, accessed June 27, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Here I am paraphrasing C.L.R. James, *Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, (London: Allison and Busby, 1938). James was, of course, paraphrasing Karl Marx.

<sup>21</sup> Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 318. Bhabha’s point here is that the “nation” emerges in the void left by the uprooting of kinship and community. It is parasitic.

<sup>22</sup> For an analysis of the way that Riel’s career and death is celebrated, see Kevin Bruyneel, “Exiled, Executed, Exalted: Louis Riel, ‘homo Sacer’ and the Production of Canadian Sovereignty,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 3 (September 2010): 711–32.

struggled for recognition. “For” not “against” is a simple shift but has profound implications for how to approach the story of his life. Riel proposed a version of Confederation that competed with the vision being formed in Ottawa, and, because it was compelling, he won many allies and friends to his cause.

Narrating Riel as rebel is a cultural and political strategy that depends upon a positional superiority<sup>23</sup> of the nation state over history. Resistance cannot be relied upon to give us an accurate nor a humanist understanding of Riel. One could say that Riel’s story is one of colonization, and that the retelling of his life has also been shaped by colonialism. By displacing this narrative of rebellion/resistance, this dissertation reveals the cracks in the nation state version of the past to tell a story where contestation of Canadian authority led to failure of domination.<sup>24</sup> Starting this story with his father, and stopping in 1874, a history of gradual political growth emerges, which illustrates the slow process of negotiations between various actors in the formation of the state from the bottom up. Shifting attention away from the drama of rebellion to the everyday activities of petition claims and legal battles shows how Riel and the Métis were much more involved in state-making than historians have previously acknowledged.

By defending Métis rights in public, Riel tested the flexibility of what has recently been called the emerging liberal order project.<sup>25</sup> And, when the liberal order fell back upon ideas of

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<sup>23</sup> For a full elaboration of this point, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 12–14. As Said points out, it is the productive power rather than the restrictions which create cultural hegemony which are of interest. See also Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> As William Roseberry argues, the goal of studying state hegemony is not to understand the history of domination, but the places where it failed. William Roseberry, “Hegemony and the Language of Contention,” in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (December 2000): 617–645. A critical response to McKay’s approach is registered by Jeffrey McNairn, “The frameworks’ ability to accommodate opposite empirical outcomes is one of its great strengths for a reconnaissance of Canadian history, but it is thereby almost impervious to empirical testing.” Jeffrey McNairn, “In Hope and Fear: Intellectual History, Liberalism, and the Liberal Order Framework,” in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Michel Ducharme and Jean-François Constant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 64–97.

racial difference to preserve white rule, Riel exposed the incoherence of racist theories.<sup>26</sup> This incoherence could be written out of history through the framework of Resistance. In fact, Riel, as the founder of a province and an active participant in the politics of Confederation, does not naturally fit into the camp of opposition, and he shows us the poverty of such a binary. This study proposes what Ian McKay has called a “reconnaissance.” As opposed to a Canadian “synthesis,” which lumps together dissonant stories, McKay’s “more modest strategy” of reconnaissance, or a mapping of unfamiliar territory, shows that “Liberal Canada was surrounded by ‘exceptions’ that defined the ‘rule’: and sovereign was he who decided on the exception.”<sup>27</sup> Taking up the liberal order framework Robin Jarvis Brownlie also points out that Liberal Canada’s hegemony was shaped by a dynamic of opposition.<sup>28</sup> We might say that Riel’s response to the Confederation project checked the “liberal order” and forced it to negotiate new terms. Or, more precisely, following Robert McDonald’s pointed critique about the variants of liberalism,<sup>29</sup> I would argue that Riel proposed to impose the Métis as a hegemonic group with their own stake in the liberal order project.

When Riel argued that the Métis could be Indigenous and practice statecraft, he challenged a binary of settler/savage that has been at the heart of Canadian history. Riel shows us that Indigenous does not mean “non-responsible” or non-political, rather he participated in the

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<sup>26</sup> Ruth Sandwell makes a similar point in her essay. “Missing Canadians: Reclaiming the A-Liberal Past,” in *Liberalism and Hegemony*, 246–73.

<sup>27</sup> McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework,” 627.

<sup>28</sup> Brownlie writes “opposition reshaped liberalism into a distinctly Canadian form. Though First Nations people have lost and suffered a great deal in their interactions with Canada...they have inflicted some important defeats as well...they have done so in part by blocking liberal order initiatives and in part by selectively deploying liberal rhetoric about rights and justice, infused with their own understandings of such concepts, to win at least some battles in the long war over property, law, jurisdiction, and authority.” “A Persistent Antagonism: First Nations and the Liberal Order,” in *Liberalism and Hegemony*, 289.

<sup>29</sup> McDonald points out that the definition and delineation of “given social groups” who imposed their leadership within the liberal order framework remains unclear, and that liberalism was both a source of power and a source of resistance. This flexibility of McKay’s framework makes it useful. “‘Variants of Liberalism’ and the Liberal Order Framework in British Columbia,” in *Liberalism and Hegemony*, 322–346.

same political game as others. Telling his life story outside of the resistance framework thus presents an opportunity to expose a double standard in Canada's history. Invariably, Indigenous Peoples have tried to participate in political activities defined as "normal" by the cultural elites, such as Confederation, but have faced prejudice. If they sounded like "Indians," they were not deemed legitimate experts. If they sounded like "politicians," they were considered assimilated and no longer authentic. A similar double standard has, at different times, been applied to French Canadians, Irish and other cultural minorities. The key difference is that these groups were not forced to abandon their identity in order to gain citizenship. As Elsbeth Heaman argues, conservative politicians used the "rights" of these communities to critique the universalist liberal order.<sup>30</sup> The beating heart of Canadian politics was the rights of minority groups and Riel, just like George-Étienne Cartier and Joseph Howe, attempted to use Confederation to defend the interests of "his" people.<sup>31</sup> The Canadian state was the product of old colonial loyalties that were twisted into accommodation and deal making. Canadian politics were shaped between these "borderlands" politics where the pressures involved in brokering between diverse groups were constantly demanding accommodation. The Confederation of Manitoba was simply another chapter of a larger story.

Telling truths about Canada, to borrow John Ralston Saul's book title, involves examining how Riel's encounter with Canada was marginalized as "resistance."<sup>32</sup> Riel, the Métis, and many other aboriginal peoples were oppressed by an increasingly powerful nation state which imposed boundaries that disrupted their lives and livelihood even while they sought to make it an "aboriginal nation". This is the problem with John Ralston Saul's vision of Canada as

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<sup>30</sup> Elsbeth Heaman, "Rights Talk and the Liberal Order Framework," in *Liberalism and Hegemony*.

<sup>31</sup> In the debates around Confederation Cartier used the "diversity of races" to defend Quebec's interests, would promote a healthy competition, and Howe demanded "better terms" for Nova Scotia.

<sup>32</sup> John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2009).

a “metis” place.<sup>33</sup> To say, as Saul does, that Canada is an aboriginal nation and to celebrate the “other” within may be a praiseworthy attempt at recognition, but it dismisses, with astonishing myopia, the marginalization of people that suffered from centuries of exploitation and dispossession as aboriginal peoples. To suddenly hear that those boundaries do not in fact exist because “we” are all metis is not merely preposterous, but also painful to hear. Riel proposed a vision of Confederation that would have included the Métis in 1869. But by framing it as a “Resistance” and debating over the terms of “amnesty,” Canada showed its refusal to understand that vision. By contrast, this study of Riel’s life illustrates how Indigenous politics could effectively engage with the state’s legal and political discourses, even if that engagement was later denied.<sup>34</sup>

## Historiography

*“Il n’est pas étonnant de voir l’effet qu’il faisait sur ces natures simples et honnêtes comme l’étaient les Métis, lorsqu’il leur démontrait leurs droits les plus sacrés foulés aux pieds par l’évahissement de leur pays par le Canada.”<sup>35</sup>*

The quote above is from the memoir of Louis Schmidt, Riel’s boyhood friend. He observes that Riel was capable of shaping the opinions of those around him. This is a trap for a biographer because it can overstate Riel’s impact. Riel’s story needs to be balanced between the limited choices he faced and the broader social transformations.

The task of preserving documents related to the history of Riel’s life and of the Métis nation was initially taken up by a group of Métis who came together to form the Union Nationale

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<sup>33</sup> Saul’s work was subjected to a withering critique as an instance of the effort to symbolically recolonize Riel for Canada. See Adam Gaudry, “The Métis-Ization of Canada: The Process of Claiming Louis Riel, Métissage, and the Métis People as Canada’s Mythical Origin,” *Aboriginal Policy Studies* 2, no. 2 (February 19, 2013): 64–87.

<sup>34</sup> For Dale Turner such participation is necessary to undermine colonialism’s power. See *This is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> Louis Schmidt, “Les Mémoires de Louis Schmidt,” *Le Patriote de l’Ouest*, 8 February 1912, 4.

de Saint Joseph.<sup>36</sup> In the beginning of the twentieth century, the first histories emerged from the pen of the Catholic Missionary Reverend A.G. Morice.<sup>37</sup> Morice's *A Critical History of the Red River Insurrection After Official Documents and Non-Catholic Sources* appeared in 1935. Morice portrayed Riel as the victim of Anglo-protestant fury and hatred; however, his narrative was seen by the Métis, who felt betrayed by the Church, as essentially a defence of Bishop Taché.<sup>38</sup> When confronted with a detailed report of the errors in his book and an accusation of being an enemy of the Métis, Morice, unrepentant, replied with a long letter in *La Liberté* stating that it was "difficult to change a negro's colour."<sup>39</sup> Unsatisfied, the Métis *comité historique* employed Auguste-Henri de Trémaudan to write a more favourable history which was published as *Histoire de la Nation Métisse dans l'Ouest Canadien* in 1936.<sup>40</sup> Trémaudan was given access to the Riel family papers and conducted interviews with the family. He cast Riel as a nationalist and the leader of a small people oppressed by English Canada. However, Trémaudan died before he could finish the chapter on 1885 and his history was published with an appendix rather than footnotes. As a result, it was met with a lukewarm response from the academic community.<sup>41</sup> It seems that Morice's work was received favourably by French-Canadian academics, though with less enthusiasm by English Canadians. In the same year, 1936, George Stanley's *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* appeared and radically transformed English academic opinions on Louis Riel and the significance of the "rebellions." This was all the more remarkable because he did not have access to the Riel family papers, but relied mainly on the

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<sup>36</sup> Bernard Bocquel, *Les Fidèles à Riel: 125 Ans d'évolution de l'Union Nationale Métisse Saint-Joseph du Manitoba* (Saint-Vital, Man.: Les Éditions de la Fourche, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> Morice published his *Histoire abrégée de l'Ouest Canadien* in 1914.

<sup>38</sup> For these letters see PAM MG3 D1 #449-453. See also Raymond Huel, "The Clergyman as Historian: The Rv. A.-G. Morice, O.M.I.," *CCHA Historical Studies* 52 (1985): 83-96.

<sup>39</sup> *La Liberté*, 5 August 1925, 3.

<sup>40</sup> A.H. de Trémaudan, *Histoire de la Nation Métisse dans l'Ouest Canadien*, (Montreal: Albert Levesque, 1936).

A.H. de Trémaudan, "Louis Riel and the Fenian Raid of 1871," *The Canadian Historical Review* 4 (1923): 134-135.

<sup>41</sup> Huel, "The Clergyman as Historian," 92-93.



archives in Ottawa. For Stanley, the events of 1869-70 and 1885 were not the “western battle ground of the traditional hostilities of French Catholic Quebec and English Protestant Ontario,” but a manifestation “of the problem of the frontier, namely the clash between primitive and civilized people.”<sup>42</sup>

Following Stanley’s political history, a new era of scholarship began, introducing works more sympathetic to Riel’s cause and influenced by anthropological interests. Marcel Giraud published his massive *Le Métis Canadien* in 1945, which analysed the conflict as an anthropological issue and the resistance as a key instance in the process of ethnogenesis.<sup>43</sup> Giraud thus cemented the idea that the Métis nation was born of conflict and war. Montana historian Joseph Kinsley Howard’s *Strange Empire*, published posthumously in 1952, recast Riel as a warrior for racial justice; or, as he put it, “The John Brown of the Half-breeds”.<sup>44</sup> While there is not much evidence that either of these scholars consulted the Riel papers in Winnipeg, they advanced a sympathetic view of the Métis. Howard’s book in particular became a cult classic for a generation of readers in the 1960s.<sup>45</sup> It was in reaction to this new attention that Stanley determined to write his authoritative biography of Riel—or perhaps it was a wry response to his teacher Douglas Creighton who had written his biography on John A. Macdonald, Riel’s nemesis.<sup>46</sup> Stanley’s *Louis Riel*, for which he had extensive access to the Riel Papers, appeared in 1960 and would become the benchmark for studies of Riel.

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<sup>42</sup> George Francis Gillman Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), vii. Bumsted points out that this thesis was first presented by Alexander Ross in his history of Red River written in 1856. See Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1856).

<sup>43</sup> Marcel Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien: son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'ouest*. (Paris: Institut d’ethnologie, 1945).

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire: A Narrative of the Northwest* (Toronto: Swan, 1956).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* David Doyle, *Louis Riel: Let Justice Be Done* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2017), see acknowledgements.

<sup>46</sup> Much later Stanley admitted that when he had proposed to write a biography of Riel to Douglas Creighton, the author of a magnum opus on John A. Macdonald, and the doyen of Canadian history, cried, “No, not that man,

In the 1960s regional studies were increasingly displacing the sweeping histories of the earlier generation. Already in 1957, perspectives were shifting. With *Manitoba: A History* William Morton recast the idea of the “savage” confronting “civilization” thesis to argue that Red River was an “island of civilization in the wilderness,” and recast the Métis as engaging with modernity and civilization.<sup>47</sup>

During the 1970s, as regional history continued to fragment the story of national destiny, social and cultural history generated new historical knowledge. Diane Payment conducted a study as a Parks Canada researcher in 1980 of Riel’s family and home which provided important social and material context for historians interested in Riel’s life.<sup>48</sup> Cultural studies were making further inroads. In an effort to round out the non-political side of Riel, a collection of Riel’s poetry and his diaries were edited and published by Glen Campbell, Thomas Flanagan, and Gilles Martel.<sup>49</sup> Thomas Flanagan and Gilles Martel re-asserted the importance of religion in Riel’s thinking and life work by arguing, with historical and comparative research, that Riel’s life ought to be understood as that of a messianic prophet.<sup>50</sup> Flanagan’s *Louis ‘David’ Riel: Prophet of the New World* was published in 1979. Gilles Martel completed his dissertation in 1976, but did not publish the book *Le Messianisme de Louis Riel* until 1984.<sup>51</sup> Their work

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never!” George Stanley, “The Last Word on Louis Riel—The Man of Several Faces,” in *1885 and After: Native Society in Transition*, eds. F. L. Barron and J. B. Waldram (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1986), 3-22.

<sup>47</sup> Morton’s history “was in many respects autochthonous, the offspring of the fur trade, the missions, and the deep soil of the Red River Valley. The Dominion recognized rather than created Manitoba.” Robert Wardhaugh, “W.L. Morton, Margaret Laurence and the Writing of Manitoba,” in *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region*, eds. Sarah Carter, Alvin Finkel and Peter Fortna (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 329-348.

<sup>48</sup> Diane Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980).

<sup>49</sup> Louis Riel, *Louis Riel: Poésies de Jeunesse*, ed. Gilles Martel, Thomas Flanagan, and Glen Campbell (St. Boniface, Man.: Éditions du Blé, 1977).

<sup>50</sup> For a broader study of the debate surrounding his millenarianism and alleged insanity, see Gregory Betts, “Non Compos Mentis: A Meta-Historical Survey of the Historiographic Narratives of Louis Riel’s ‘Insanity,’” *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, no. 38 (2008): 15.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Flanagan, *Louis “David” Riel Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); Gilles Martel, *Le messianisme de Louis Riel* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984).

revisited Riel's motivations, but left Stanley's broader narrative of a conflict between civilization and savagery intact. Given, however, the Métis community's hostility to the Catholic Church and Thomas Flanagan's later work in Canadian courts, not to mention his inflammatory *Riel and the Rebellion: Reconsidered* (1983),<sup>52</sup> it is no surprise that these "cultural history" works were, and continue to be, viewed sceptically by many Métis.

During the late 1970s, work began under the direction of George Stanley on the *Collected Writings of Louis Riel/Les Ecrits Complets de Louis Riel*. Raymond Huel, Gilles Martel, Thomas Flanagan and Glen Campbell were the principal editors. The project to publish all the writings of Louis Riel together in one collection was completed in 1985 in time for the centenary of the Battle at Batoche. It provides a tool of unique and significant benefit to anyone interested in Riel's life and work. Yet, in some respects this collection, which offers so much—making it possible to think comprehensively about Riel's life and his achievements, served to cap research rather than open it up further. Occasionally new documentary evidence was discovered and then reprinted, but there were no new attempts to tackle an authoritative biography.<sup>53</sup> Stanley, Flanagan and Martel had made their indelible mark on the biography of Riel. Contributing to this, in the 1980s, with the pressure of social history, biographies of "great men" were suddenly less relevant.<sup>54</sup> In addition, the conclusions of some of the editors, Flanagan and Martel in particular, have made researchers cautious of the *Collected Writings*. It is significant that recent

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion 1885 Reconsidered* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

<sup>53</sup> Occasionally new documents were found and printed in articles. Glen Campbell and Thomas Flanagan, "Updating the Collected Writings of Louis Riel," in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, ed. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard Ens, and R.C. MacLeod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), 271–88; Thomas Flanagan and Glen Campbell, "Newly Discovered Writings of Louis Riel," in *Metis in Canada: History, Identity, Law and Politics*, eds. Christopher Adams, Greg Dahl, and Ian Peach (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2013), 249–76; David McCrady, "Louis Riel and Sitting Bull's Sioux: Three Lost Letters," in *The Western Métis: Profile of a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Robert Craig Brown's 1980s Presidential address to the Canadian Historical association "Biography in Canadian History" provides a good sense of the debate at the time. URL: <http://www.cha-shc.ca>, accessed June 25, 2017.

research by Métis scholars has been muted or silent with respect to the *Collected Writings*. The most recent doctoral dissertation by Adam Gaudry refers to Trémaudan's earlier history of the Métis nation rather than the *Collected Writings*.<sup>55</sup>

A legitimate concern with the *Collected Writings* is that they oversimplify the documents and this can lead to a misinterpretation of the texts.<sup>56</sup> The documents are wrenched loose from their context and the typed pages hide the important details that help us understand how and why the source was created. To get a sense of the origin and intention of Riel's writing, I have found it fruitful to frequently return to the original documents in the archives.

Of Riel's recent biographers Maggie Siggins comes closest to a sympathetic understanding of his Indigenous heritage, but her biography is marred by an overly romantic narrative and lack of documentation. Published in 1994, *Riel: A Life of Revolution* re-asserts the importance of his parents and his "romantic spirit," while explicitly challenging Flanagan and de-emphasizing Riel's American citizenship.<sup>57</sup> By contrast, *Riel vs. Canada: the Making of a Rebel*, published in 2001 by J.M. Bumsted, seems to be an attempt to return to the older political history.<sup>58</sup> Few historians have made a serious return to the archives to examine Riel's political life or work. One noteworthy exception is the work of Darren O'Toole, who along with writing an interesting study of the idiom of republican liberty in Red River, published several articles on the political significance of Riel's work. He argues that Flanagan's interpretation of the archives with respect to Metis claims to Indian title has been unfairly selective and is problematic at

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<sup>55</sup> Adam Gaudry, "Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk - 'We Are Those Who Own Ourselves': A Political History of Métis Self-Determination in the North-West, 1830-1870" (PhD Dissertation, University of Victoria, 2014).

<sup>56</sup> Michael Gauvreau, "Review: George F.G. Stanley (editor), *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, 5 volumes," *Manitoba History* 16 (Autumn 1988). URL: <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/>.

<sup>57</sup> Maggie Siggins, *Riel: A Life of Revolution* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1994). The narrative of Riel's life of revolution is nicely contrasted with Siggins's other work on Riel's grandmother. Maggie Siggins, *Marie-Anne: The Extraordinary Life of Louis Riel's Grandmother* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2008).

<sup>58</sup> J. M. Bumsted, *Louis Riel v. Canada: The Making of a Rebel* (Winnipeg: Great Plains, 2001).

best.<sup>59</sup> Shifting the focus away from Riel's life itself, researchers began to investigate representations of Riel's life. Albert Braz's far ranging study *The False Traitor*, published in 2003, was a landmark in this respect.<sup>60</sup> Jennifer Reid's work on Riel's life through the lens of post-colonial theory has explained the important symbolic work that Riel does in the process of founding a nation state.<sup>61</sup>

Increasing awareness of "Red River myopia," and the unrealistic "shadow" cast by Riel on a much more complex story, as Jim Miller noted in 1988, caused scholarship to shift away from Riel to the Métis.<sup>62</sup> The methods of social history, first introduced in the Northwest by feminist historians Sylvia van Kirk and Jennifer Brown, would radically transform research into the history of Métis.<sup>63</sup> In this shift to social history, researchers moved away from the Riel Papers, to examine scrip, census data, and Hudson's Bay Company Fort records. This contextualized many of Riel's struggles, but in general Riel and his papers were of less interest to these studies. The "New Peoples" conference held in 1981 at the Newberry Library in Chicago is the best example of this broader vision of Métis history.<sup>64</sup> The 1990s consolidated the broadening of Métis history according to the new focus on social and cultural history.<sup>65</sup> In 1996

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<sup>59</sup> Darren O'Toole, "Thomas Flanagan on the Stand: Revisiting Métis Land Claims and the Lists of Rights in Manitoba," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 41, no. 1 (2010): 137–47. Darren O'Toole, "The Red River Resistance: The Machiavellian Moment of the Red River Métis of Manitoba" (PhD Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2010).

<sup>60</sup> Albert Raimundo Braz, *The False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

<sup>61</sup> Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012); Jennifer Reid, *Religion, Writing, and Colonial Resistance: Mathias Carvalho's Louis Riel* (Boulder: The Davies Group, 2011).

<sup>62</sup> Jim Miller, "From Riel to the Métis," *The Canadian Historical Review* 69, no. 1 (March 1988): 1–20.

<sup>63</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980). Doug Sprague and R.P. Frye used scrip and census data to write *The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation: The Development and Dispersal of the Red River Settlement, 1820-1900* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983).

<sup>64</sup> The conference produced an extremely important book by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown, eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985).

<sup>65</sup> Bumsted published *The Red River Rebellion of 1869-70*, in 1995. Despite the reactionary use of the term "rebellion," Bumsted would later adopt the term resistance in his future work.

Gerhard Ens published *Homeland to Hinterland: the Changing World of the Red River Metis*, a remarkable synthesis situated between the social and political approaches to Red River.<sup>66</sup>

Increasingly, Riel was viewed as the leader of a much broader social movement against Canada rather than as the creator of a new religion.

By studying the population itself, scholars revealed that the group was not homogenous. Frits Pannekoek challenged Stanley's interpretation of Red River as a community united against colonization, and revealed divisions through a study of Church Missionary Society papers. Pannekoek argued that the Anglophone community of "Halfbreeds" resisted and challenged Riel's leadership which was rooted in the muscle of Métis boatmen.<sup>67</sup> Irene Spry refuted Pannekoek to argue that the divisions were based upon class rather than linguistic or religious ties.<sup>68</sup> This debate helped to elaborate the historical formation of the community, seeing it as one divided against itself.

Scholars have also continued to push the geographical limits to the Métis story. Nicole St-Onge's study of the Métis of St. Laurent demonstrated that Métis communities were quite diverse and complicated by class.<sup>69</sup> The recent books by Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, and Nicholas Vrooman, "*The Whole Country was ... 'One Robe'*": *The Little Shell Tribe's America* are a remarkable demonstration of the continuation of the Métis history in the borderlands.<sup>70</sup> David McCrady's study of the Sioux borderlands has also unearthed three new

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<sup>66</sup> Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

<sup>67</sup> Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Pub, 1991). His first articles appeared in the 1970s.

<sup>68</sup> Irene Spry, "The Metis and the Mixed-bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 98-118.

<sup>69</sup> Nicole St-Onge, *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba*.

<sup>70</sup> Nicholas Vrooman, "*The Whole Country was ... 'One Robe'*": *The Little Shell Tribe's America* (Grand Falls: Riverbend, 2012); Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line*.

letters written by Riel,<sup>71</sup> however the implications of these borderlands studies have yet to be applied systematically to the study of Riel's life.

In the new millennium, efforts to revisit Riel from a transnational perspective have borne fruit. Jeremy Mumford contextualizes Riel's execution in the broader context of the search for sovereignty in the borderlands<sup>72</sup> and Lauren Basson examined Riel's entanglement in race relations in the American Northwest.<sup>73</sup> Nicole St-Onge and Jean-François Belisle have applied a transnational approach to their study of Louis Riel's spirituality.<sup>74</sup> In their study of newspapers Todd Webb and Geoff Read have shown the implications of placing Riel's reputation in a transatlantic context.<sup>75</sup>

Not only a transnational perspective helps understand Riel's life, but recent work from Indigenous studies helps tell his story in a new way. Indigenous epistemologies have become increasingly important for understanding the Métis worldview. Published in 1990, Diane Payment's *Batoche (1870-1910)* introduced the argument that the Métis had developed a syncretic religion that allowed the Métis to accept Riel's leadership.<sup>76</sup> Payment also introduced the term *Otipemisiwak*, or "free peoples," to the academic community, and it has become an important landmark in the historiographical efforts to come to terms with understanding and appreciating the influence of Indigenous culture, thinking, and worldviews on the Métis. Brenda

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<sup>71</sup> David McCrady, "Louis Riel and Sitting Bull's Sioux: Three Lost Letters," *Prairie Forum* 32, no.2 (Fall 2007): 223.

<sup>72</sup> Mumford, "Why was Louis Riel, a United States Citizen, Hanged as a Canadian Traitor in 1885?" 237-262.

<sup>73</sup> Lauren L. Basson, "Savage Half-Breed, French Canadian or White US Citizen? Louis Riel and US Perceptions of Nation and Civilisation," *National Identities* 7, no. 4 (2005): 369-88.

<sup>74</sup> Jean-François Bélisle and Nicole St-Onge, "Between García Moreno and Chan Santa Cruz: Riel and the Métis Rebellions," in *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada*, edited by Tolly Bradforth and Chelsea Horton (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2016), 102-18.

<sup>75</sup> Geoff Read and Todd Webb, "'The Catholic Mahdi of the North West': Louis Riel and the Metis Resistance in Transatlantic and Imperial Context," *Canadian Historical Review* 93, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 171-95.

<sup>76</sup> Published later as Diane Payment, *"The Free People—Otipemisiwak": Batoche, Saskatchewan, 1870-1930* (Ottawa: Canadian Parks Service, 1990).



MacDougall's book *One of the Family* examined the important idea of kinship relationships and presented the Cree term *Wakhootowin* as a means of understanding Métis communities.<sup>77</sup> These terms have become increasingly important for scholars trying to understand the complex webs of kinship at the heart of Métis culture.<sup>78</sup> Recently, scholars Chris Andersen, Adam Gaudry, and Chantal Fiola, have argued that an older traditional knowledge had a formative effect on Métis thinking.<sup>79</sup> Some researchers such as Kerry Sloan, Adam Gaudry, Nicole St-Onge and Jean-François Belisle, have brought that awareness to bear upon the life and work of Louis Riel, but none in a comprehensive manner.<sup>80</sup> Here I have attempted to overcome the limited access to Indigenous perspectives where possible, and highlight the impact of relationships between and among the various Indigenous political bodies in Red River. The interests of Cree, Saulteaux and Dakota Peoples, to name a few, may have been obscured by the vagaries of the colonial archive, but for Riel they were serious concerns.

## Approaches and Methods

*Je, sous-signé, constitue par les présentes[!] le Révérend Père Alexis André pour mon exécuteur testamentaire au sujet de mes papiers. Ma volonté est, que tous mes papiers lui soient remis et qu'il en ait le soin et que la publication lui en appartienne. Je prie le Révérend Père Alexis André de voir à ce que mon corps soit transporté à St Vital pour y être exposé un temps convenable, afin que mes très bons parents, mes bons amis prient pour moi. Car tout prophète que je sois, il faudra en expirant que je rend compte de ma mission. Et j'ai besoin que les*

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<sup>77</sup> Macdougall, *One of the Family*. For an exposition of the relationship of *wākōtowin* to Cree history, see Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007), 12-14.

<sup>78</sup> Macdougall and Podruchny, "Scuttling along the Spider's Web."

<sup>79</sup> Chris Andersen, "Moya 'Tipimsook ('The People Who Aren't Their Own Bosses'): Racialization and the Misrecognition of 'Métis' in Upper Great Lakes Ethnohistory," *Ethnohistory* 58, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 37-63; Adam Gaudry, "Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk - 'We Are Those Who Own Ourselves,'" Chantal Fiola, *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinaabe Spirituality* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015).

<sup>80</sup> Kerry Sloan, "'A New German-Indian World' in the North-West: A Métis Deconstruction of the Rhetoric of Immigration in Louis Riel's Trial Speeches," in *Riel's Defence: Perspectives on His Speeches*, ed. Hans V Hansen (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 166-203; Gaudry, "Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk - 'We Are Those Who Own Ourselves'."



*prières les plus ferventes accompagnent mon esprit devant le juge éternel et trois fois grand qui règne dans les cieux.*<sup>81</sup>

Perhaps Louis Riel worried that future biographers, less able to comprehend the cultural modes and philosophy specific to Métis society, would denaturalize and misunderstand his own life. Riel left autobiographical notes, drafts of his writings, and records of his thoughts and political meetings in diaries and scrapbooks. Preserving his documents was part of his struggle to redefine the terms of Confederation. Riel was, to borrow a phrase from Maureen Konkle, attempting to “write the nation back.”<sup>82</sup> Returning to those papers is an opportunity to demythologize his story and see how he attempted to construct his own history and environment. Like so much of Riel’s life, historical method also lies on the threshold between native and newcomer relations.

As recent theorists of the Métis resistance Adam Gaudry, Darren O’Toole, and Chris Andersen have remarked, the resistance is a central element of Métis Nationhood.<sup>83</sup> It was fundamental to an ethnogenesis that located and made political claims concrete. While this is indeed the legacy, I would argue that Riel’s theory was that he could teach the Canadians to understand Métis claims of nationhood and rights. He also thought he could teach the Métis about Canadian cultures of print and political organization. He was not the only one, or the first, to make this claim, but he presented it most clearly, and was responsible for translating Métis self-awareness to Canadian and British officials, and vice versa. Riel saw his writing as an effort in “civilization” itself, but from the Métis point of view. Riel sought to “civilize” the “civilizer”

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<sup>81</sup> McCord Museum Archives (MMA), Riel Papers, 20193. Riel’s last will and testament was also published in *La Minerve* and *Le Manitoba* on 26 November, the original has not been found. This “codicil,” written in Riel’s hand, seems to have been part of the original set of papers. See also “Déclaration sur l’enterrement de son corps et sur la publication de ses écrits,” doc. #3-143, in *CWLR*, 256–57.

<sup>82</sup> Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography* (Durham: University of North Carolina, 2004).

<sup>83</sup> Chris Andersen, “Métis”: *Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2014), 113; Gaudry, “Kaa-Tipeyishoyahk - ‘We Are Those Who Own Ourselves’”; O’Toole, “The Red River Resistance.”

by informing Canadians about Métis perspectives, rights, and intentions. Almost as a trickster, Riel left behind traces that could be used to expose the fragments of Métis culture and history in order to trip up the unsuspecting historian of Empire.<sup>84</sup> Riel strove to create understanding and sympathy for the Métis with the Canadian public, and told his story in order to demonstrate his vision of what George Sioui termed the “Americanization of the world.”<sup>85</sup> Riel’s caution is not surprising given the trajectory of Canadian historiography. Despite important exceptions, the irreverence and inability of historians to react responsibly and constructively to Indigenous history has a long pedigree. Riel’s papers are thus an invitation for historians to, as Peter Nabokov describes American Indian historical method, “visit the back country” and to leave the beach, and to let the places “talk back”.<sup>86</sup>

It is important to remember that Riel wrote and worked in a time when the distinction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous was much less clear. Much of Riel’s time and thinking went into understanding and explaining the unique place of the Red River Métis community, and their relationship to other Indigenous Peoples, as well as to newcomers and their institutions. The conventions of the Métis community was neither something that he imagined, nor something that was fixed. The novelty of Riel’s life was his expert and creative engagement with the Red River community and the French-Canadian community. The convergence of worlds that he proposed resulted in a radical new way of understanding the relationship of the Métis to Canada. Thus, to

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<sup>84</sup> In some respects, he was similar to Natalie Zemon Davis’ hero in *Trickster Travels* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006). The Trickster figure is of course an important one in Indigenous culture. In Cree the term is *wisahkêcâhk*, a term also used by the Métis elder Ron Evans. I have not yet seen a study of the trickster in Métis studies. For the Cree storytelling tradition see Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007), 97-100.

<sup>85</sup> Georges E. Sioui, *For an Amerindian Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), xx.

<sup>86</sup> Peter Nabokov, *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

understand Riel's life it is necessary to seek evidence and information from a variety of epistemological sources.

In many respects, this dissertation is traditional in its reliance upon texts and formal writing. It is possible because of the rich variety of sources that have been left for us—sources which Riel attempted to leave for us. Where possible this dissertation draws upon oral historical research of other historians, but does not present original research from oral history. Generally, I have sought to use methods of cultural and social history, and, where possible, the dissertation follows the threads and traces of Riel to understand the broader social structures of the past.

While researching and writing, I kept in mind the principle that there are two ways of totally misunderstanding any biographical subject, much like Francois Furet has written of Robespierre, “one is to detest the man, the other is to make too much of him.”<sup>87</sup> But the “many faces” of Riel are even more nuanced today, the controversy over the statue of Louis Riel on the parliament building grounds in Winnipeg best illustrates the competing legacies of the figure.<sup>88</sup> The monument erected by Marcien Lemay and Étienne Gaboury depicted Riel as a naked figure, twisted and suffering. He is pathetic, tortured and ugly. The Manitoba Metis Federation rejected this representation and favoured a more statesman-like figure designed by Miguel Joyal. This statue represents the triumph of Riel and the continued presence of Métis in politics today.<sup>89</sup> As a public statement by the Métis, it suggests a refusal of colonial domination. As Audra Simpson writes, “There are still Indians, some still know this, and some will defend what they have left.”<sup>90</sup> To make such a statement is to assert independence by refusing to participate in the narratives

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<sup>87</sup> François Furet, *Penser la Révolution Française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 65.

<sup>88</sup> Shannon Bower, “‘Practical Results’: The Riel Statue Controversy at the Manitoba Legislative Building,” *Manitoba History* 42 (Autumn/Winter 2001). URL: <http://www.mhs.mb.ca>.

<sup>89</sup> See *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 12.

that colonization has laid out. But, the image of the “father-founder” clasping the Manitoba Act in a determined and firm grip, also does not tell the whole story. Turning Riel into a symbol, as Nathalie Kermoal argues, “has a reductive effect on the intellectual scope of his thought.”<sup>91</sup> A longer and broader view of Riel’s life is necessary to recognize his remarkable achievement.

This dissertation comes from my perspective as a white Canadian worried about the manner in which Riel and Indigenous Peoples more generally are dealt with in Canadian history of the state, in culture and in heritage. Riel has been constructed in various ways for various reasons, often far removed from his own interests. These constructions, relying upon categorical understandings of difference prove unhelpful for understanding a life full of ambiguity, agency, and self-invention. As Kim Anderson writes, Native identity “is not about simply playing certain roles, or adopting a pre-set identity; rather [...] it is an ongoing exercise that involves mental, physical, spiritual and emotional elements of our being.”<sup>92</sup> The goal, from my perspective, has been to understand how, despite all the oppression Riel maintained his power. Following Anderson I ask: What was his “recognition of being”? What alternatives did he propose? Biography brings his perspective to the fore. Access to the perspective of one individual allows a historian to explore the tensions between moral agency and historical determinism, and thereby highlight the aspirations, goals, and the emergence of identity, in conjunction with social interactions, across space and time.<sup>93</sup> By simultaneously respecting the agency of an individual and the structures of society, a study of Riel’s life can illustrate the broader cultural and social

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<sup>91</sup> Nathalie Kermoal, “Reconsidering Riel: A Necessary Exercise,” *Inditerra: Revue Internationale Sur l’Autochtonie*, no. 2 (2010): 35–43.

<sup>92</sup> Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2000), 9.

<sup>93</sup> See discussion of biography as history in a special issue of *American Historical Review*, 114, no. 3 (June 2009).

phenomena. In this way, Riel's life becomes an allegory for the tensions that make up the broader issues of nineteenth-century North America.<sup>94</sup>

Furthermore, by drawing out Riel's perspective on an issue like Confederation shows how Riel justified and understood his sense of self and place. The choice to end not with Riel's death in 1885, but in 1875, emphasizes his motivations and sense of mission, rather than the consequences of his life. He acted in 1869 with the belief that the Métis could be respected and would be accepted within Canada. As Marshall Sahlins argues, agency is a cultural construct.<sup>95</sup> It was a vision still possible in an era when racism and dispossession had not yet marginalized the Métis people. This is not to say that Canada could have "chosen" another path, but it was thought about differently. In 1874 when he demanded Amnesty from the Government, Riel could not know the outcome of the "Rebellion of 1885," nor could he predict the betrayal of the Métis nation by French Canada and the Catholic Church. Riel perceived and interacted with Canada differently in 1874 because Canada itself was a very different kind of project.

This dissertation explores the cluster of ideas that informed the cultural process of colonization and considers how they were employed in creating consensus. Ideas about liberty, state authority and representative government were tools juxtaposed by Riel with Indigenous ideas of governance like *wahkootowin* and *Otipemisiwak*.<sup>96</sup> The genius of Riel's experimentation with transnational ideas about civilization is to be found in this nexus. His versatility with the idioms of civilization sharpened the debate about who had legitimacy to determine the political future of Confederation. However, this dissertation is not an intellectual history in the traditional

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<sup>94</sup> It therefore treads the fine line between microhistory and biography that Jill Lepore has proposed, see "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *The Journal of American History*, 88, no. 1 (June 2001): 129-144.

<sup>95</sup> Marshall David Sahlins, *Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 155-59.

<sup>96</sup> Gaudry, "Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk - 'We Are Those Who Own Ourselves'"

sense. It grounds Riel's ideas and his intellectual work in the culture and conventions of his time, but emphasizes that those ideas were formed in reaction to specific circumstances and they were much more experimental than programmatic. The dissertation examines the social construction of ideas and pieces together a history of his thinking from a wide spectrum of epistemological influences including, but not limited to family, philosophy, religion, and political networks. It explores how Riel engaged his opponents as a public intellectual and used his pen to explain the justice of his cause. The complexity of Riel's various intellectual contexts is what makes his life so interesting. As Nathalie Kermoal writes, "Far from diminishing or discrediting him as an intellectual, this complexity contributes to enriching his intentions, exposing his humanity and making him fallible."<sup>97</sup>

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Stepping away from the tyranny of narratives cast in the shadow of 'madness,' 'rebellion,' and execution allows us to re-consider Riel's intentions without the enormous weight of historical condescension and examine the implications of his life in their own context. This is a story of colonization, but in this complex and multi-layered process of converging worlds, Riel was empowered because of his ability to travel through multiple worlds and to shift his identities as the circumstances required. As Nicholas Dirks has argued, colonization was a process of cultural control,<sup>98</sup> and Riel, crossing the boundaries imagined by nation founders, was well equipped to contest Canada's claims to determine cultural and political legitimacy.

The nature of a tragic tale is to render the hero passive and explain how a hapless victim of fate meets their doom. This is a particularly poignant technique in narrating stories of resistance against imperial forces. As David Scott writes "Picturing colonialism in one way—as

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<sup>97</sup> Kermoal, "Reconsidering Riel: A Necessary Exercise."

<sup>98</sup> Nicholas B. Dirks, ed., *Colonialism and Culture*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

a system of totalizing degradation—enables (indeed obliges) the critical response to it to take the form of longing for anticolonial overcoming or revolution.”<sup>99</sup> The temptation has been great for many historians to cast Riel in this mould. The madness of a “Hamlet,” complete with the legacy of haunting by his father, pervades much of the history of Riel; but this is a tired discourse. Rather than Hamlet, I’d like to consider Riel as Ulysses. The Odyssey is much less linear in its construction. It also feels as though the opening lines were written for Riel “Tell me, O muse, of the man of many devices who wandered full many ways...”<sup>100</sup> As Riel steered between the Scylla of liberal revolution and Charybdis of Catholic counter-revolution, the sails of his ship were filled with the winds of kinship and frontier liberties.

Red River society was composed of various groups, not necessarily united, and Riel failed in winning all of them over, particularly the Canadian Party. Yet, he was chosen as the leader of the Métis. Louis Riel’s biography allows us to see the crossing and merging of multiple worlds. From Red River, to Montreal, to the United States, and in the context of British territorial claims, Riel staged a confrontation that was quite different from Canada today. Drawing upon Catholic and Métis spirituality and traditions, and French and English culture, these worlds provided him with intellectual and social resources to formulate a Métis nation and to justify their right to live on their land. He was so effective that even today he confronts Canada’s claim to national sovereignty and forces the state to recognize the violence in its own foundation.

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<sup>99</sup> Tragedy, particularly romantic tragedy, is a powerful narrative, but it is limited in its longing for total revolution. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 95.

<sup>100</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by A.T. Murray, 2 volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919). Accessed online: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>.





## Chapter 1

### The Riel-Lagimodière Family

Louis Riel's parents, Jean-Louis Riel and Julie Lagimodière, were both from prominent families in Red River society and the Riel-Lagimodière union played a key role in the socio-political structures governing Red River community life.<sup>1</sup> This chapter examines the rich cultural-political careers of these two individuals in the changing context of the Métis borderland communities in the northern plains of North America. Their lives offer an illustration of the shifting relationship between state and society in the Northwest that their son would later benefit from. As the fur-trading colonial relationship shifted to one based upon White settlement and Indigenous dispossession, the Riel-Lagimodière family, because of its role as an important political broker, was implicated in the process of extending state authority and in the masculinization of political authority that characterized the northern Red River Settlement between 1840-60.

The full extent of Jean-Louis Riel's political activity as a Métis leader has not been recognized in the historiography of Red River. Historians usually limit their discussion of his achievements to his leading the resistance against the HBC fur-trading monopoly (the Guillaume Sayer trial) and operating one of the first water mills in the settlement.<sup>2</sup> He did more than “grumble while he ground his wheat,” to use one historian's turn of phrase.<sup>3</sup> Jean-Louis played a

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<sup>1</sup> I have chosen to use his full name Jean-Louis Riel in the interests of clarity—however the archival documentation often referred to him as Louis Riel, Louis Riel dit L'Ireland, or Louis Rielle, and there is also at least one instance he is referred to as the son of Jean-Baptiste La Gimodière (his father-in-law). There are also multiple spellings of the Lagimodière last name (Lagemonier or Lajemonier) I have used the former.

<sup>2</sup> For example J. M. Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations: The Red River Settlement and the Emergence of Manitoba, 1811-1870* (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 2003). George Stanley discusses in detail the significance of Jean-Louis Riel in the early settlement, but concludes that he was too independent and too firm to be appointed to the government and unable to fulfill his potential. *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1963), 16–17. The recent PhD by Darren O'Toole, “The Red River Resistance: The Machiavellian Moment of the Red River Métis of Manitoba” (PhD Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2010) is a noteworthy recent exception.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire: A Narrative of the Northwest* (Toronto: Swan, 1956), 62.

key role in the emergence of a state, and the transformation of political culture in the period leading up to the Resistance of 1869. Jean-Louis Riel was not born into leadership, but became an influential figure among the Métis of Red River by developing political skills while working on the borderlands as well as by forging new social ties adapted to meet changes in the socio-political order of the mid-nineteenth century.

Previous historians have likewise given too little weight to the formative influence of Julie Lagimodière. Considering her experiences presents a sharpened perspective on the process of settler colonialism in Red River. Her life highlights the role of gender as a determinant of social relations in Red River, and sheds light on the role of patriarchy in the process of colonisation. The first “White” family in the settlement, but accepted as Métis within the community, the Lagimodière family also offers an opportunity to reconsider the issue of racial essentialism and the extreme racialization of public order that attended settler colonial dreams of domination. This flexibility around the ethnic identity of the Lagimodière “Métis” illustrates an essential characteristic of this emerging identity.

This study of the lives of Jean-Louis and Julie, and the Riel-Lagimodière union, provokes a three part argument. First, the Métis political power made them brokers of state hegemony. The state has been usefully defined by Elsbeth Heaman as a “series of office holding individuals,”<sup>4</sup> a definition which allows analysis, and a means to measure the efficacy, of the early HBC state and the more formal structures that emerged over the course of the nineteenth century. References to the Riel-Lagimodière family in the state archives illustrate their participation in the functioning of the early state. It is a story of the rifts and ruptures of hegemony rather than state

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<sup>4</sup> Elsbeth Heaman, *A Short History of the State in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 1.

domination.<sup>5</sup> To understand the emergence of the state in the borderlands one should ask, with James Scott “to what extent has the state’s hegemonic project itself been influenced by the force of popular experience and of mobilized popular expectations of the revolution?”<sup>6</sup> During the nineteenth century, as Michel Hogue writes, the northern Plains were a “place of multiple, layered, and conflicting claims to territory.”<sup>7</sup> It was not easy for any state to assert its sovereignty. “In unexpected ways, then the border [the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel] that was meant to overwrite Indigenous claims to the Plains actually bolstered Métis political power and gave impetus to their ongoing cross-border presence.”<sup>8</sup> A political bloc united through family ties, military dominance, political organization and market forces, the Métis, as borderlanders, became power brokers and forced state-institutions aspiring to hegemony to recognize their interests. This gave force to an emerging argument “that their rights as Indigenous peoples, in effect transcended the border.”<sup>9</sup>

This situation of contested hegemony led to a creolization of British authority and second part of this argument. The Métis adapted British institutions to their own needs.<sup>10</sup> In the borderlands due to their position of dominance and as illustrated by the frequency of Métis rights-based claims for British civil liberties, the Métis buffalo brigades effectively remade

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<sup>5</sup> See William Roseberry, “Hegemony and the Language of Contention,” in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, ed. Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994). The framework for recent discussions of hegemony in Canada is found in Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 4 (December 2000): 616–78. Gramsci’s theory of hegemony was based upon the need for balance between consent and force by a ruling party. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 169–73. Scholarship that explores the tensions between the state and hegemony has been helpful in framing this conception of contested hegemony. Perry Anderson, “The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci,” *New Left Review*, I, no. 100 (December 1976): 5–78.

<sup>6</sup> Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), vii.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line*, 51.

<sup>9</sup> Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line*, 15. While his book is more concerned with the emergence of the mobile buffalo hunting brigades, who he is careful to point out did not speak with only one voice, he concludes that this argument ran across the Métis claims in the borderlands.

<sup>10</sup> Donald Fyson makes a similar argument in his study of justice in Lower Canada, see *Magistrates, Police and People: Everyday Criminal Justice in Quebec and Lower Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

British authority in a manner that would serve their interests. In Red River during the turbulent years of 1840-1860 the Métis became active participants in the new forms of state authority as a means to resist and mediate settler colonialism. The borderlands in which the Métis had emerged as a hegemonic bloc were under increasing stress as they were settled by both Indigenous and newcomer peoples.<sup>11</sup> By the end of the 1860s, the buffalo hunt was already in decline.<sup>12</sup> As George Colpitts has shown this had immediate implications for Métis political power.<sup>13</sup> James Daschuk points out that the tensions caused by the declining bison herds were matched by corporate reform.<sup>14</sup> The unprecedented expansion of state power and growing influence of a capitalist economy restructured the techniques of governance. Often described as settler colonization, this transformation entailed new ideas about power that were extremely racialized and gendered.<sup>15</sup> Settler colonialism was intended to dispossess Indigenous peoples, but the Métis were not without their own techniques for accommodating and resisting these forces. As Michel Hogue has shown Métis challenged settler colonial erasure and, like other minorities, interfered

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<sup>11</sup> Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*; Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Norma Jean Hall, ““Perfect Freedom”: Red River as a Settler Society, 1810-1870” (MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2003), 19–20.

<sup>12</sup> Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 52–53. This process was gradual needs to be localized. Hugh Dempsey, for instance, points out 1877 was a great year “lots of buffalo.” *A Blackfoot Winter Count* (Occasional Paper No. 1.) Calgary, Alberta: Glenbow Foundation, 1965. While the buffalo hunt was declining in Red River, the herds were still large enough further west and many Métis moved to follow them.

<sup>13</sup> *Pemmican Empire: Food, Trade and the Last Bison Hunts in the North American Plains, 1780-1882* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> James W Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), 73.

<sup>15</sup> Settler colonialism is “a specific mode of domination” based upon dispossession of land. Patrick Wolfe argues it is a process, rather than an event, of creating a political organization that premises the sovereign capacity of settlers and requires the erasure of Indigenous people. “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8 no. 4 (2006): 387–409. As a process it involves a revolution in economic, social and political relations. See Lorenzo Veracini, ““Settler Colonialism”: Career of a Concept,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 2 (June 2013): 313–33. Recent criticism has argued that “settler colonial” studies school remains “largely a White concept for thinking through contemporary colonial relationships,” or simply a new narrative for old history. Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakosch, “The ethical demands of settler colonial theory,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3-4 (August November 2013): 426–443. Adam Barker and Emma Lowman have engaged with this critique by turning the tables on the “Indian problem” to examine the “Settler problem” *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Canada* (Winnipeg: Fernwood Press, 2015).

with and inflected the extension of the state by their assertion of their autonomy in this process.<sup>16</sup>

What has been less recognized, and as the lives of Jean-Louis and Julie show is that the skills and authority of Métis leaders, and the Indigenous relationships they fostered, led to a situation in which Métis publics were part of the state hegemony—it was increasingly *their* state.

Finally, the third part of this argument is that this extension of state authority had a transformative impact upon Métis internal governance. One of the most damaging aspects of Métis participation in the process of state-building was the long term impact on governance based on kinship ties. Métis continued to draw upon kinship as a source of cultural cohesion. Yet as women were excluded from official state politics, kinship ties no longer exerted the same control over Métis unity. As they did not participate in treaty-making, petition writing or leading public meetings women were marginalized in the new conception of the body politic. Ultimately, the masculinization of politics that was at the heart of state logic would undermine Métis forms of governance, but that would take some time.

To make these arguments, the chapter draws upon a host of new literature on the history of the Métis, and is informed by Indigenous studies, literature on state formation, and feminist critique. It collects together the archival evidence on the life of Louis Riel, and suggests a new perspective on his role in the transformation of the borderlands. The comprehensive documentation of the Riel-Lagimodière family has important implications for understanding the life of Louis Riel. To reconstruct the public and private lives of Jean-Louis and Julie was not easy as there are large gaps in the archival record. As expected when researching the life of Métis women, it was especially difficult to track down archival records for Julie. Where possible

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<sup>16</sup> Hogue, *Métis and the Medicine Line*, 41-47. Recent research explores the surprisingly rich participation of Indigenous peoples in state politics, for example see Maxime Gohier's, "La Pratique Pétitionnaire Des Amérindiens de La Vallée Du Saint-Laurent Sous Le Régime Britannique: Pouvoir, Représentation et Légitimité (1760-1860)" (Phd Thesis, Université de Québec à Montréal, 2014).

this chapter draws upon the work of other scholars to draw parallels that fill in the gaps. Fortunately, as Doulgas Sprague and Ronald Frye write, Red River settlement is one of the “most thoroughly documented of all proprietary colonies in English colonial experience.”<sup>17</sup> Thus this chapter brings together a diverse, and somewhat scattered, series of sources to evaluate the influence of the Riel-Lagimodière family on the early development of Red River Settlement: government records, newspapers, court transcripts, letters, and petitions.<sup>18</sup>

## 1.1 Early Red River State Formation

In the early nineteenth century, the government of Red River, the “Council of Assiniboia,” was a weak colonial state governed by the Hudson’s Bay Company.<sup>19</sup> Originally created in 1821 to prevent and resolve increasingly costly conflicts between furtrading companies, White Settlers, Métis and Indigenous Peoples, the HBC claimed jurisdiction over the vast area called Rupert’s Land.<sup>20</sup> Assiniboia, that area within a fifty-mile radius of the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, formed part of this territory. In the 1840s it was unclear whether the HBC had jurisdiction over the Métis in the territory administered by the Council of Assiniboia, and as

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<sup>17</sup> Douglas Sprague and Ronald Frye “Manitoba’s Red River Settlement: Manuscript Sources for Economic and Demographic History,” *Archivaria* (9 Winter 1979-80): 179-194. As Bumsted points out its history was chronicled by a highly literate and historically self-conscious group of residents. “Reporting the Resistance of 1869–1870,” in *Thomas Scott’s Body: And Other Essays on Early Manitoba History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000), 179–96.

<sup>18</sup> While I have consulted the originals of many documents, for ease of access I have referred to the published reproductions. Particularly important for this chapter are E.H. Oliver, ed., *The Canadian North-West and Its Early Development and Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council of the Red River Colony and the Northern Department of Rupert’s Land* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914); Dale Gibson, *Law, Life and Governance at Red River: General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia Annotated Records, 1844-1872*, volume 2 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> For a useful comparative study of colonial governance by a “Company-state” see Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Like the EIC, the HBC was equally eager to protect its privileges and control access to markets even while reducing the costs of administering a government.

<sup>20</sup> For a brief history of the state see Lionel Dorge, “The Métis and Canadian Councillors of Assiniboia,” *Beaver* 305, 1 (Summer 1974): 12-19.

Michel Hogue points out this was something they used to their advantage.<sup>21</sup> The establishment, in 1844, of a trading post by Norman Kittson, an American, at Pembina, just south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, is a good instance of the tenuous nature of HBC governance. Dale Gibson has shown the challenges of administering this settlement and the ambivalent efforts of the HBC to establish legal and democratic institutions.<sup>22</sup>

Further challenges to HBC governance emerged from the metropole as, in Victoria's age of prosperity, stability and refinement,<sup>23</sup> policies and attitudes demanded that the HBC appointed state rule more efficiently and justly. Gibson's study of the Courts, Roy Stubbs's work on the Records of Rupert's Land, and Barry Cooper's biography of, the Company reformer, Alexander K. Isbister illustrate how outside pressures for reform of HBC governance were building.<sup>24</sup> Increasingly, the British empire saw itself as a "liberal Empire," where the effects of a liberal market, in a didactic fashion, would spread law and civilization to its hinterlands under the assumption that these areas lacked it.<sup>25</sup> In the wake of the 1832 trial of Colonel Edward Eyre for abuse of power<sup>26</sup> these challenges were no minor concerns for the Governor of a colony, and the HBC Governor George Simpson spearheaded a number of reforms.<sup>27</sup> Drawing upon the

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<sup>21</sup> Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 41-48.

<sup>22</sup> Dale Gibson, *Law, Life and Governance at Red River: Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, volume 1 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> This age of reform and self-improvement is discussed by Susie Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>24</sup> Roy Stubbs, *Four Records of Rupert's Land: A Brief Survey of the Hudson's Bay Company Courts of Rupert's Land* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1967). Barry Cooper, *Alexander Kennedy Isbister: A Respectable Critic of the Honourable Company* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 107-39.

<sup>25</sup> Duncan S.A. Bell, *Victorian Visions of Global Order: International Relations in Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). In a different colonial context, Elizabeth Elbourne explores how evangelical missionaries were able to reconcile economic liberalism with their spiritual work, *Blood Ground*, 247-54.

<sup>26</sup> For a thorough overview of this case and its implications across the British world see Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> See Gibson, *Law, Life and Governance at Red River*, 36-50. E.E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), 235-270.



moral capital of abolishing slavery, metropolitan organizations such as the Aboriginal Protection Society agitated against the despotic powers of colonial authorities. At the same time, Britain, from the mid 1840s, established itself as a leader in a movement for “free-trade.”<sup>28</sup> The imperial government had a new skepticism towards the monopolies granted to old companies. The pressure was on for the HBC to govern, effectively and “liberally,” the vast territory described in its charter.

This impetus from the metropole was complicated by local challenges to its authority. One source of this defiance was the presence of companies based in the United States that continued the practice of hiring local traders—many of them Métis who persisted in their cross-border trade.<sup>29</sup> The simmering discontent burst into hostility in 1834 with the assault of a Métis trader by an HBC clerk. The uprising was the “catalyst” for local government reform.<sup>30</sup> Simpson’s concern with security was self-evident. On 12 February 1835, he addressed the Council of Assiniboia and made the case for a police force:

It must be evident to one and all of you that it is quite impossible society can be held together, that the time is at length arrived when it becomes necessary to put the administration of Justice on a more firm and regular footing than heretofore, and that immediate steps ought to be taken to guard against dangers from abroad or difficulties at home, for the maintenance of good order and tranquillity, and for the security and protection of lives and property.<sup>31</sup>

They imposed an import duty of 7.5% to defray the cost of a new jail, a “Volunteer Corps” of 60 officers and privates, as well as the creation of four district courts and one general quarterly court. The Company would continue its allowance of £100 for courts costs; the rest would be covered by the import duties. As Darren O’Toole observes “a tax, which was essentially to be

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<sup>28</sup> P. J. Cain & A. G. Hopkins, “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I: Old Colonial System, 1688–1850,” *Economic History Review* 39, no. 4 (November 1986): 501-525.

<sup>29</sup> John Pritchett, *The Red River Valley, 1811-1849* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1942), 240-244.

<sup>30</sup> O’Toole, “The Red River Resistance,” 100.

<sup>31</sup> Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 267.



burdened by Métis and Half-breed freighters, was to put into place an apparatus of physical violence that would enable the Company to enforce both its monopoly and the levying of the tax itself against the freighters.”<sup>32</sup> The Company’s goal to make the colony financially independent was however at odds with its own and British interests in keeping out the American influence in the territory.

In 1835, the Council was expanded to fifteen and Cuthbert Grant was the first Métis member appointed to the Council: he was made “warden of the Plains” in 1835 and was appointed to the Council in 1839.<sup>33</sup> Grant’s political influence in the community long predated this appointment. In fact, he was the prototype for Métis leadership because he acted as a semi-military chief, directed the buffalo hunt, resolved judicial disputes, and spoke at diplomatic events between other nations.<sup>34</sup> These qualities of leadership were older practices, Indigenous to the plains, of societies of the Omaha, Saulteaux, Cree, and Assiniboine.<sup>35</sup> All the Company did was formalize the value of Grant and other Métis military figures in their capacity as “bodyguards.”<sup>36</sup> In the absence of a professional military or police force the nascent government

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<sup>32</sup> O’Toole, “The Red River Resistance,” 101.

<sup>33</sup> Lionel Dorge, “‘The Métis and Canadien Councillors of Assiniboia’ [1835-1856],” *The Beaver*, Summer 1974, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Margaret MacLeod, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown: Warden of the Plains of Red River* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974). MacLeod sees Métis leadership as deriving uniquely from military skill. For more on the famed military genius of Métis leaders see Morton, “The Battle at Grand Coteau: July 13 and 14, 1851,” *MHS Transactions*, 3 (1959-60).

<sup>35</sup> Peter Walker, “The Origins, Organization and Role of the Bison Hunt in the Red River Valley,” *Manitoba Archeological Quarterly* 6, No. 3 (July 1982): 66.

<sup>36</sup> Métis leadership continues to be characterized by frontier romance and colonial “othering.” This harks back to William Morton’s thesis that Métis political power rested upon military discipline and violence. “The power behind the defiance to the monopoly and the government of Assiniboia was the power, essentially military, of the *métis* of the buffalo hunt. The occupation of the hunt had not only kept alive the corporate sense of the *métis*, their belief in themselves as a “new nation”; it had also, as it developed, given them a character as a people, a kind of government, and a very definite discipline.” *Manitoba*, 78.

relied upon the potency of Métis violence to back up state authority—it was cheaper. By 1853 three of the six members of the Council were Métis or “halfbreeds.”<sup>37</sup>

As Lionel Dorge writes, “Since the reorganization of the Council of Assiniboia in 1835, the Hudson’s Bay Company had grown more sensitive to the desire of the settlement’s inhabitants to participate in public affairs.”<sup>38</sup> However, continued disruptions of Company authority during the 1840s shows that these piecemeal strategies by the Company were only temporarily successful. This quasi-state continued to be restricted by numerous inter-related factors. In the context of an insecure borderland, many traders outside of the settlement simply ignored the Company law. Less formalized Indigenous modes of governance overlapped with and continued to challenge imperial sovereignty. The *otipemisiwak* (people who are their own bosses) continued to maintain their independence along the frontier.

The situation was somewhat different in the “town” than in the “country”. Increased state authority was welcome in the settlement, as it had grown in size and there was increasing need for public works. Diverse local interests desired a system of government they could direct to manage community affairs. Worries about American bootleggers, raiding Dakota, and common criminals in the nascent community led to demands for better police, jails, roads, ferries, bridges, a postal system, and other community institutions. Religious authorities also pressured the government to provide more funding and were not afraid to defend the cause of their parishioners. The trick was that the HBC would have to “stoop to govern,” or in other words to build hegemony.

As E.E. Rich argues, the goal of the Company was to stabilize the colony so that it would

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<sup>37</sup> These were Francois Bruneau, William Ross and Thomas Sinclair. See Gibson, *Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, 145; Dorge, ““The Métis and Canadien Councillors of Assiniboia’ [1835-1856].”

<sup>38</sup> Lionel Dorge, “The Métis and Canadien Councillors of Assiniboia,” *The Beaver*, Winter 1974.

not be a drain on the fur trade, but could supply both employees and food for trade.<sup>39</sup> On the few occasions the government of Assiniboia gave in to colonists' demands for public expenditures, it was accused of betraying the Company's interests.<sup>40</sup> Instead, the Company attempted to "outsource" the costs of social domination by co-opting religious leaders that the Métis respected. The authority of men such as Bishop J.-A.-N. Provencher, Archbishop A.-A. Taché, Father G.-A. Belcourt and Father L.-F. Laflèche were foundational to the Métis community in Red River. Religious women, such as the Grey Nuns, Sisters Valade, Thérèse, and others also provided valuable educational, health and social security services in the community. Provencher would be named to the Council in 1838. Others who could not be counted upon to toe the Company line, like Belcourt, were forced out. The Company pursued a similar line with Protestant authorities.<sup>41</sup>

In Red River settlers, Indigenous peoples, imperial critics *and* the Company officials felt there was a need for an efficient state that could govern society. From 1840 to 1850, the newly appointed Court Recorder, Adam Thom, suggested and implemented a series of reforms to the legal and political structure of the government.<sup>42</sup> Thom, who had served on Lord Durham's

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<sup>39</sup> Rich, *The Furtrade and the Northwest to 1857*, 262.

<sup>40</sup> Governor Simpson did embark upon a number of reforms in the 1830s to promote local industry. *Ibid.*, 248-256. However, by 1840s these efforts were seen as inadequate in the eyes of many Colonists.

<sup>41</sup> The role of the clergy is perhaps one of the most hotly debated aspects of the Early Red River Settlement. Fritz Pannekoek has outlined the key events in which religious missionaries came to displace the authority of the bourgeois directing the fur-trading companies. His study of the Rev. G.O. Corbett abortion and Sarah Ballenden scandals argues that religion explains the divisions in the community. However, in the opinion of this author, he goes too far when he states that Métis and Halfbreed community was a "society of dependence." Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Pub, 1991), 207.

<sup>42</sup> Thom had immigrated from Scotland to Montreal in 1832 and likely had a hand in drafting Lord Durham's Report. Kathryn Bindon, "Thom, Adam" *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-. Accessed online 5 August 2017, URL: <http://www.biographi.ca/> [hereafter *DCB*]. Gibson, *Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, 62-64. "Minutes of the Council, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1851" in Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 363-79. One of the most important impacts of Thom's review of the HBC's legitimacy to act as a government ("this almost despotic privilege") was to require all motions not carried by unanimous vote to be read twice on two different days. This reform seems to have frequently worked in the Métis favour in later years.

municipal commission following the Rebellions of 1837-38 and had the reputation as an anti-French bigot, was a believer in a progressive liberal empire. Thom cast a critical eye over the affairs of the settlement and urged changes to everything from taxes on stoves, to establishments of libraries, and alcohol licensing. Thom saw himself as Victorian Hercules lifting uncivilized savages into peace and prosperity.<sup>43</sup>

These reforms ultimately offered government patronage for the Métis and thus gave them a stake in the functioning of the nascent state. For example, a petition by Maximilien Genthon dit Dauphné and François Bruneau, presented to the Council on 3 July 1841, requested permission to establish a distillery and a reform of the appointment of police officers. It was “Resolved 6<sup>th</sup>. ...the vacancies [...] be filled up by ballot from each District of the Settlement.”<sup>44</sup> Henceforth the appointments of privates would be conducted more democratically (fifty-four at a salary of six pounds sterling a year). Cuthbert Grant was named sheriff, Louis Battoche and Jean-Parenteau Bourque were appointed sergeants, and numerous Métis were included on the payroll.

Unfortunately, for the Company, Thom’s reputation as a racist who hated French speaking Canadiens,<sup>45</sup> had preceded him. He did little in the community to correct it. While Thom became the chief target of Métis hostility, the crux of the issue lay in the resistance from the Company to recognize Métis authority. This was the gordian knot that the Company could not unravel. Given the distance and relative isolation of the settlement, it was virtually impossible to dictate terms through “gunboat” diplomacy that was effective in other readily

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<sup>43</sup> The preface to his 1851 report on the “Law Amendment Committee” captures his own sense of the Augean task he faced: “if Mr. Thom is, henceforward, to give formal opinions in writing, he must either shock the common sense of the community, with antiquated absurdities in all their naked deformity, or assume to himself a responsibility, or rather an authority, which ought not to fall to the lot of any individual whatever.” “Minutes of the Council, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1851” in Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 370.

<sup>44</sup> “Minutes of the Council, 3 July 1843” in *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>45</sup> In an effort for clarity I have used the term Canadien to refer to French speakers from Lower Canada, the term Canadian is more generic, referring to English speakers and the government.

accessible coastal areas.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, maintaining and supporting a local military force was expensive and potentially disruptive as deserters and mutinies posed their own threat to government authority.

As new industrial, labour and political interests transformed the society in the 1840s and 1850s it was increasingly clear that the Company was increasingly out of step with the needs of the community. The growing American presence further complicated HBC political leadership. The capital of free-traders made it possible to envision a market that was very different from the planned and regulated market of the Company. The problem was, as local historian Alexander Ross astutely observed in 1856, that Métis production of furs was greater than the HBC demand, while at the same time the HBC attempted to enforce its monopoly.<sup>47</sup> In this new setting, Métis leadership was less needed for organizing the buffalo hunt, a quasi-military role, and more for protecting the rights of trade and political independence. This transformed political sphere required a different set of skills and attitudes rooted in the expression of *otipemisiwak*. Grant's authority as a military leader would be usurped by others more capable of speaking to Métis interests in this new economic and social context.<sup>48</sup> The Riel-Lagimodière family would emerge in a context where physical force needed to be increasingly dressed in a rhetoric of legitimacy. As an eloquent speaker who possessed the ability to organize political pressure Jean-Louis was sought out by others to be a representative of collective interests. Ultimately, the colonial state was forced to co-opt local power structures, which as the lives of Jean-Louis Riel and Julie Lagimodière show in their turn, were increasingly intertwined with the state.

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<sup>46</sup> For example see, Barry Gough, *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846-1890*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1856), 166, 242–46; Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 53–55.

<sup>48</sup> William Morton suggests that Grant's stance on the Sayer trial led to discontent with the leadership of Grant. William Morton, "The Battle at the Grand Coteau: July 13 and 14, 1851," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions* 3 (1960): 37–49. Pascal Breland was tapped as Grant's successor. See Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 95.

## 1.2 Home and Family

Writing to Bishop Taché in 1885, Riel provided the following description of his parents.

Ma mère est bonne. Mon Père était un homme de bien. Et j'ai confiance qu'il est au ciel. Mes premières années ont été parfumées des meilleures odeurs de la foi. Car mon bien-aimé Père ne permettait à personne de dire du mal en ma présence. La prière en famille, le chapelet ont toujours été sous mes yeux. Et ils sont dans ma nature comme l'air que je respire. La figure recueillie de ma mère, les regards qu'elle dirige habituellement vers le ciel, son respect, son attention, sa dévotion dans les exercices de piété ont toujours fait et laissé sur moi les vives impressions du bon exemple.<sup>49</sup>

Family and church determined much of Louis Riel's early life. They shaped how Riel understood his relationship to the land, to the community, and to God. As Macdougall suggests, the Cree term *wahkootowin* helps us conceptualize how these relationships, according to an Indigenous worldview, shaped Métis governance.<sup>50</sup> According to Adam Gaudry, Métis governance can be defined according to the concepts of *wahkotoowin* (all my relations) and *otipemisiwak* (the people who are their own bosses).<sup>51</sup> Following Gaudry, I argue, these concepts rooted the Riel-Lagimodière family in the social and political structure of Red River.

Jean-Louis Riel was born at Ile à la Croix in 1817. The son of a Canadian fur trader, Jean-Baptiste Riel dit l'Ireland<sup>52</sup> and a Métis woman named Marguerite Boucher. One early

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<sup>49</sup> "Lettre à A.-A. Taché," doc. 3-077, in *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel*, ed. George Stanley and Thomas Flanagan, vol. 3 (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 140.

<sup>50</sup> Following Sioux anthropologist Ella Cara Deloria, Macdougall uses the Cree term *wahkotoowin* to "explain the large and all-encompassing web of social obligation and responsibility that connected individuals and communities throughout their territory within an extended family matrix." *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 8. For the relationship of *wahkotoowin* to Cree history see Neal McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2007), 12-14.

<sup>51</sup> Adam Gaudry, "Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk - 'We Are Those Who Own Ourselves': A Political History of Métis Self-Determination in the North-West, 1830-1870" (Phd Dissertation, University of Victoria, 2014) I have used the spelling suggested by Diane Payment, *The Free People-Li Gens Libres: A History of the Métis Community of Batoche, Saskatchewan* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009).

<sup>52</sup> The name "dit l'Irelande" suggests that he was a descendant of a soldier of the French Merchant Marine, Jean-Baptiste Riel, who served in Lavaltrie, Berthier at the end of the seventeenth century. René Jetté, *Dictionnaire généalogique des familles du Québec des origines à 1730* (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1983).

biographer claimed, based on family interviews and eye-witness reports, that she was “Montagnais” Métis, a term which Brenda Macdougall argues was used to denote Dene peoples.<sup>53</sup> His life exemplifies the emergence of the Métis as a People.<sup>54</sup> According to Michel Hogue, Métis communities “were marked by their distinctive language, dress, artistic traditions, and religious practices, by their occupational identities as key players in the fur and provisions trade, and by their expansive kinship networks...”<sup>55</sup> Jean-Louis’s life represents the experience of a constellation of Plains peoples who were “transformed by the expansion of mercantile capitalist markets for furs as well as the introduction of epidemic diseases, metallic weaponry, and other goods in the eighteenth century.”<sup>56</sup> Known in Cree as *otipemisiwak*, these free-traders were the community that the HBC governor, Miles Macdonell, targeted in his attempts to control the Pemmican trade in 1814.<sup>57</sup> Even after the merger of the NWC and the HBC in 1821, this group, now aligned with the American Fur Company who had taken over the NWC trade network, were the backbone of the resistance against HBC incursions into Métis territory.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Joseph Tassé, “Les Canadiens de l’Ouest: Louis Riel, Père,” *L’Opinion Publique*, 6 March 1873, 1-2. Macdougall “The Myth of Metis Cultural Ambivalence,” in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 422–59.

<sup>54</sup> The emergence of the Métis is a paradigmatic instance of the kind of ethnogenesis that J. Hill has explored. As he argues ethnogenesis can be a conceptual tool to understand how a people emerge by their positioning in a history of domination. “Introduction: Ethnogenesis in the Americas 1492-1992,” *History, Power, and Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Americas, 1492-1992* (Iowa City: Iowa City University Press, 1996), 3. For a more full bibliography of Métis ethnogenesis see Gerhard John Ens and Joe Sawchuk, *From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Métis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to the Twenty-First Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

<sup>55</sup> Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> His lack of success is marked by the Battle at Frog Plain. Gerhard Ens, “The Battle of Seven Oaks and the Articulation of a Metis National Tradition, 1811-1849,” in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, eds. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 93–119. Lyle Dick, “The Seven Oaks Incident,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de La Société Historique Du Canada* 2, no. 1 (1991): 91–113.

<sup>58</sup> Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 23–27; O’Toole, “The Red River Resistance,” 98–100.



Jean-Louis was to some extent separated from this Plains culture as he was sent to Lower Canada in 1820 to be educated at a petit séminaire in Berthier-en-haut.<sup>59</sup> At least one of his sisters remained in Montreal married to a carpenter by the name of John Lee. His mobility only seems to have exaggerated his resistance to domination of Métis freedom. Between 1837 and 1838 he was back in the Northwest, working for the HBC in the Lac La Pluie district (the intersection of present day Minnesota, Manitoba and Ontario).<sup>60</sup> This work was familiar to someone whose family had been engaged in trading on the plains for many years.<sup>61</sup> However, in Lower Canada, he may have been involved in early agitations of the 1837-38 Patriot movement. According to Margaret MacLeod and William Morton, Jean-Louis Riel “brought with him much talk of Papineau, and of how the new Recorder in Assiniboia, Adam Thom, had written against the French in Montreal and had helped Lord Durham prepare the Report which said that the best fate for the French would be to be assimilated by the British.”<sup>62</sup> Jean-Louis Riel was likely the source of the “Papineau standard” and renewed agitation that Alexander Ross reported on the prairies around this time. “The Papineau rebellion which broke out in Canada about this time, and the echo of which soon reached us, added fresh fuel to the spirit of disaffection. The Canadians of Red River sighed for the success of their brethren’s cause. Patriotic songs were

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<sup>59</sup> Morton, William “Riel, Louis, Sr.” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-. See also Joseph Tassé “Les Canadiens de l’Ouest: Louis Riel, Père,” *L’Opinion Publique*, 6 March 1873, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Morton, “Riel” *DCB*. In the Great Lakes tensions over the Lower Canadian Rebellions caused HBC Factor William Nourse to fear a Métis attack at Sault Saint Marie. Karl S. Hele, “The Anishinabeg and Métis in the Sault Ste. Marie Borderlands: Confronting a Line Drawn upon the Water,” in *Lines Drawn upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borders and Borderlands* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 76.

<sup>61</sup> Despite research into the fort journals held at the PAM, I have not been able to confirm his presence here. However, the Lac La Pluie Post-Journal 1837-38 records that in October 1837 “W. Shaw, Riel and the young lads about the Fort digging and carting some fine rich black earth from the portage to the Kitchen Garden with a view of improving the soil and to mix with the large quantity of dung already spread upon it last spring.” This could be Jean-Louis. Other activities from this time included fishing sturgeon, building a new house and a boat. The Lac La Pluie trading district was a site of competition for the Northwest Company the HBC who founded Fort Frances in 1793. After the 1821 amalgamation of the NWC and the HBC, it was known as Lac Pluie until 1830 when it was named Fort Frances in honour of George Simpson’s wife. See Lac La Pluie Fort Journal 1837-38, B.105/a/20, PAM.

<sup>62</sup> MacLeod, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown: Warden of the Plains of Red River*, 135.



chanted on every side in praise of Papineau. In the plains, the half-breeds made a flag, called the Papineau standard, which was waved in triumph for years, and the rebels' deeds extolled to the skies."<sup>63</sup> Hard evidence for this is lacking, but it is a reasonable assumption. Riel greeted Thom with hostility and the Métis were generally considered sympathetic to the Patriote cause. In 1842, he returned briefly to Montreal. In the mid-1840s, Jean-Louis returned to Red River and became engaged in cross-border trade near Pembina, moving back and forth between the British settlement and the American trading post. He emerged as a key figure of resistance against the HBC appointed government and a spokesman for the *otipemisiwak*, the "people who own themselves."

Louis Riel's mother came from a different social context. Born in 1822, she was the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière and Marie-Anne Gaboury. The Lagimodière family was one of the more successful families to settle in Red River. Her father, Jean-Baptiste had been rewarded with land for his loyalty to the HBC and Lord Selkirk, when he made a harrowing trip of 1800 miles to Montreal to warn Lord Selkirk about the Northwest Company's attacks on HBC forts in 1816. Marie-Anne Gaboury is on record as the first White woman resident in the Northwest, following her husband on the long canoe trek into the Red River region in 1807.<sup>64</sup> During this time of hostility between the two communities, and with her husband away in Montreal, Mme Lagimodière née Gaboury feared that the Métis of Pembina would attack Fort Douglas, where she was living, and so she took refuge further north with Chief Peguis, a Cree leader.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Alexander Ross *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1856), 237.

<sup>64</sup> Georges Dugas, *La première Canadienne du Nord-Ouest ou biographie de Marie-Anne Gaboury, arrivée au Nord-Ouest en 1806, et décédée à Saint-Boniface à l'âge de 96 ans* (Montréal: 1883). Maggie Siggins, *Marie-Anne: The Extraordinary Life of Louis Riel's Grandmother* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2008).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 249–51.

Thus both of Julie's parents were White Canadian settlers and their daughter Julie would in 1875 apply for scrip as a White settler.<sup>66</sup> Julie's Whiteness would later become a marker of her identity for state purposes, but in Red River she was identified as Métis because of her lifestyle rather than her race or heritage.<sup>67</sup> Her children, through their father, applied for scrip as Halfbreeds.<sup>68</sup> It is likely that within Red River Julie, and likely the parents themselves, became part of the Métis community through their lifestyle. Their White origins were unusual for a Métis family but, this only illustrates the point that race did *not* determine Métis identity; kinship and religion were far more important. The Lagimodière's other children also married into Métis families, who applied for scrip as Halfbreeds.<sup>69</sup> The state administrative documentation, like scrip records, are a poor indicator of identity; far more important were daily practices such as matrilineal residency. When Jean-Louis Riel and Julie Lagimodière were married by bishop Provencher on 21 January 1844 in the chapel of St. Boniface Cathedral they initially went to live with the Lagimodière family and Jean-Louis Riel's first mill was set up on Lagimodière land.<sup>70</sup> In this sense, despite their "Whiteness," the Lagimodières were a Métis family.<sup>71</sup>

They were aged twenty-seven and twenty-four respectively.<sup>72</sup> Both were devout Catholics. Their son Louis Riel was born in October, ten months later. Abbé George Dugas tells

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<sup>66</sup> "Scrip Affidavit for Riel, Julie," Volume/box #1323, RG15-D-II-8-a, LAC.

<sup>67</sup> Theresa Schenck, "Border Identities: Métis, Halfbreed, and Mixed-Blood," in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, ed. Laura L Peers and Carolyn Podruchny (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 233–48.

<sup>68</sup> See "Scrip Affidavit for Riel, Eulalie," and "Scrip Affidavit for Riel, Joseph" Volume/box #1323, RG15-D-II-8-a, LAC.

<sup>69</sup> See "Scrip Affidavit for Harrison, Joseph," Volume/box #1323, and "Scrip Affidavit for Modeste Lagimodière," Volume/Box #1322 RG15-D-II-8-a, LAC.

<sup>70</sup> Diane Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980), 2.

<sup>71</sup> The Canadian families of Joseph Landry, Henry Coutu and Felix Latreille living in Red River since 1822 offer similar examples. Their history has not been collected, but there is a short summary in the Index of Stanley, *CWLR*, vol. 5.

<sup>72</sup> To put this in some context, her sister Josephine was married at age fifteen to Amable Nault in 1824. Marie Rose Delorme described her marriage at age sixteen as a "sale" against her will. Doris Jeanne MacKinnon, *The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith: Portrait of a Métis Woman, 1861-1960* (Regina: Canadian Plains Studies Press, 2012), 21.

us that Julie only married because she was ordered to by God.<sup>73</sup> While respecting the possibility that this story is influenced by narrative license, it seems that Julie Riel passed on to her family a strong awareness of divine direction in life. This is confirmed through a story retold by Henriette Riel, one of Julie's daughters. One day, "She [Julie] was suddenly enveloped in flames. Dazzled, frightened, she raised her eyes and there in the clouds, she saw an old man, flashing with light and encircled with fire, who in a powerful voice boomed out, 'Disobedient child... when you return to your home you will tell your parents that you will obey them.'"<sup>74</sup> While an obvious trope within Catholic, and more broadly Christian worldview, this vision should not be dismissed as it demonstrates that the Riel-Lagimodière family was convinced of the presence of the spiritual in their lives. The vision also, if one reads between the lines, illustrates one of the complex ways, suggested by Richard White, that women used Catholicism to exert some control over their marriage partners.<sup>75</sup>

Roman Catholic priests attempted to dominate the spiritual milieu of the Métis in Red River, but there is evidence to suggest that it was also flexible and subject to the influence of Indigenous thinking.<sup>76</sup> Indigenous spirituality, including visions, undoubtedly inflected Catholic teaching in Red River, and informed Métis identities just as it did elsewhere.<sup>77</sup> As Elizabeth Elbourne explains in her study of the Haudenosaunee, Indigenous peoples had to "manage" the

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<sup>73</sup> Dugas, *La première Canadienne du Nord-Ouest*.

<sup>74</sup> Quoted in Maggie Siggins, *Riel: A Life of Revolution* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1994), 31.

<sup>75</sup> Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region 1650-1815*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 72.

<sup>76</sup> While the first clergy arrived in the 1820s, the first years were marked by considerable instability. By the 1850s seven churches, four Protestant and three Roman Catholic, had been built. The Catholics erected a cathedral in St. Boniface in 1837, and the Anglicans in 1849. Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*, 33–36.

<sup>77</sup> For a broader discussion of the Indigenous inflection of Christian missions see Tolly Bradforth, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012); Susan Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

religious, economic, and political power of Christianity.<sup>78</sup> Visions, and especially recalling visions, were an important means for life-long learning and building relationships in Anishinaabeg and Métis spirituality, and as scholar Chantal Fiola explains have become an important strategy for self-knowledge and resisting colonization.<sup>79</sup> As with Henriette's notes, the letters of sister Saint-Marguerite (originally Sara) and Louis's own writings, divine revelation and direct intervention of the spiritual were part of the family upbringing.<sup>80</sup> Julie Riel's children grew up in a context of religious syncreticism, identified by Nicole St-Onge and Jean-François Belisle.<sup>81</sup>

The Riel-Lagimodière marriage represented a merging of two borderlands communities that had been growing apart since the end of the Fur Trade Wars (1819). While Riel was actively involved with the Pembina community, the Lagimodière family was, because of their ties to the land concentrated in St. Boniface. The Pembina community, like the Métis of St. Francis-Xavier described by Gerhard Ens, was more tied to the buffalo hunt.<sup>82</sup> The Métis in the north, such as those living in the parish of St. Boniface and its extensions St. Norbert and St. Vital, were more agricultural. According to Métis Elder Ron Evans, the Métis themselves distinguished between the "Métis-à-la-fort" and the "Métis sauvage."<sup>83</sup> The divergence was not hard and fast, however it does indicate an important marker of identity based upon lifestyle. Extended kinship networks

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<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth Elbourne, "Managing Alliance, Negotiating Christianity: Haudenosaunee Uses of Anglicanism in Northeastern North America, 1760s-1830s," in *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada*, ed. Tolly Bradforth and Chelsea Horton (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2016), 38–60.

<sup>79</sup> *Rekindling the Sacred Fire: Métis Ancestry and Anishinaabe Spirituality* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 77–78.

<sup>80</sup> Lesley Erickson, "At the Cultural and Religious Crossroads: Sara Riel and the Grey Nuns in the Canadian Northwest, 1848-1883" (MA Thesis, University of Calgary, 1997).

<sup>81</sup> Elbourne, "Managing Alliance, Negotiating Christianity: Haudenosaunee Uses of Anglicanism in Northeastern North America, 1760s-1830s."

<sup>82</sup> Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*. See also the MA thesis of Hall, "'Perfect Freedom': Red River as a Settler Society, 1810-1870."

<sup>83</sup> These terms were used by Ron Evans, a Métis elder and storyteller, who gave a public talk at "Riel and the Rebellion" at McGill University in the Fall of 2015.

formed through unions like the Riel-Lagimodière marriage served to reinforce the ties between these diverse communities.<sup>84</sup> As Bruce White has pointed out, marriage was a key means for women to control and direct these alliances and relationships.<sup>85</sup> The Riel-Lagimodière alliance reflected an effort to reinforce these commonalities in the face of important changes in politics, economics and social dynamics.

Louis Riel was born in 1844 in the home of his grandparents, the Lagimodière-Gaboury home, a small one room house just north of St. Boniface at the fork of the Red and the Sienne rivers.<sup>86</sup> Following a matrilineal principle Louis grew up in close proximity with his maternal grandparents and other relatives. Julie was one of more than eight children in her family, but it was the land-based wealth of her family that provided the foundation for the Riel family in Red River, and tied their children to the settlement. This was the land across from Douglas point, originally granted by Lord Selkirk.<sup>87</sup> One of Julie's elder sisters Marie Rose (b. 1801) was already a widow and also lived here. Julie's elder brother Jean-Baptiste (b. 1808) had moved out to live with his wife Pauline Harrison. Two older sisters, La Reine (b. 1807) and Josephine (La Cypres) (b. 1810) were also married and living in St. Boniface. When another French Canadian, Pierre-Henri Coutu, moved to Red River from Lower Canada he also married a Lagimodière, Marie-Catherine, and built a house on Lagimodière land. By building their homes close to, or on Lagimodière land, these families circulated between each other and formed strong social bonds.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Brenda Macdougall and Carolyn Podruchny, "Scuttling along the Spider's Web: Mobility and Kinship in Métis Ethnogenesis," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, eds. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 59–92.

<sup>85</sup> Bruce White, "The Woman Who Married a Beaver: Trade Patterns and Gender Roles in the Ojibwa Fur Trade," *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 109–47. See also Jacqueline Petersen, "The People in Between: Indian-White Marriage and the Genesis of a Métis Society and Culture in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1830," (Phd dissertation, University of Illinois, 1981.)

<sup>86</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 1. This is based upon correspondence with Henriette Riel.

<sup>87</sup> Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910*.

<sup>88</sup> Macdougall explains that matrilineal residence serves a number of important social functions, "including bride service, in which a man moves in with his wife's family but sets up his own household after he has met his

Over the next few years Jean-Louis and Julie built their own home on one of the nearby lots.<sup>89</sup> The spring ice dams caused a major flood in 1852 and the family took refuge on the Catholic mission; but by September, Jean-Louis had secured a mortgage of \$100 on his mill property for the purpose of digging a canal and erecting a new mill on another lot (#50) adjoining the Lagimodière property and backing on to the Catholic mission. According to Payment, the family moved there in 1853 to begin farming and mill work.<sup>90</sup> Julie's other elder brother Benjamin Lagimodière (b. 1811) and his wife Angélique Carrier were also residing on this lot in the 1850s.<sup>91</sup> The two families operated the mill together but likely had separate residences.

Sometime after Jean-Louis died (1864-7), Julie and the eight children moved to the front of the lot along the Red River to be closer to the Bishop.<sup>92</sup> Subsequent events show that she was no helpless widow hiding under the protection of the church. In 1868, Benjamin gave the land they had jointly occupied to his son-in-law Eduard Ellémont dit Bodé, a Canadien immigrant who had also married into the Lagimodière family. Bodé sold this land back to Julie in 1871. She was carefully ensuring her own daughters would have land to settle on, as in 1873 she sold the back of the property to her son-in-law Louis Lavallée.<sup>93</sup> Upon the death of Jean-Louis Riel, it was likely the widow who attended to the sale and management of a mill that was waiting for delivery in St. Paul.<sup>94</sup> While she consulted with her son Louis about the management and sale of

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obligations to repay the family...also...to permit the wife a period of adjustment as she makes the transition from child to married woman." *One of the Family*, 57.

<sup>89</sup> Likely Lot #50, Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910*.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-5. The loan came from Mr. Buchanan and was arranged with the legal help of William Black. See R. Gosman *The Riel and Lagimodière Families in Métis Society, 1840-60* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1977) Note 28, 120.

<sup>91</sup> Benjamin purchased the lot from Landry in 1849, 24 acres of which (Lot #51) were transferred in 1855.

<sup>92</sup> This was the "Landry House." Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910*, 7.

<sup>93</sup> Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910*; Thomas Flanagan, "Louis Riel's Land Claims," *Manitoba History* 21 (Spring 1991): 9.

<sup>94</sup> For example, Louis wrote to his mother: "Chère Maman, veuillez donc demander à Nanin [Andre Nault] s'il veut aller, au plus vite qu'il pourra, labourer un arpent ou deux de terre sur ma terre au pied du lac à Norman et y semer

Lots #50 and #51 in St. Vital, they were in her name.<sup>95</sup> In 1875, she also requested that Louis send her a power of attorney and that she apply on his behalf for a land grant, while giving him the details about the harvest.<sup>96</sup>

The primary means for the Métis to exert their influence over the church and the state was through kinship ties and extended family networks. These relations or *wahkootowin* provided coherence to Métis social order and the authority necessary for governance and active civil society.<sup>97</sup> The social capital invested in kin relations meant that labour and economic capital could easily be pooled, whether for farming, hunting, childcare, or building. In Métis society, like other Aboriginal cultures,<sup>98</sup> genealogical terms (*parent, relation, père, soeur*) were frequently used to justify decisions and action. Such relations provided the metaphors that inspired intellectual and theological concepts that were the basis for Métis political formation. As Scott Stephen's study of master-servant relations concludes, the principle of the "household" in HBC governance overlapped with Indigenous relations.<sup>99</sup> It was the overlap between these two systems that allowed for reasonable efficiency in the first institutions of government.<sup>100</sup>

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de l'orge bien clair. Vous le payerez vous-même ou je lui enverrai moi-même l'argent." "Lettre à Julie Riel, 17 May 1870," doc. #1-138, in *CWLR*, 211–212.

<sup>95</sup> Flanagan, "Louis Riel's Land Claims."

<sup>96</sup> "Julie Riel to Louis Riel. St. Vital. 14 August 1875." MG3 D2 file #10, Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter PAM).

<sup>97</sup> Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 8.

<sup>98</sup> Peter Cook, "Onontio Gives Birth: How the French in Canada Became Fathers to Their Indigenous Allies, 1645–73," *Canadian Historical Review* 96, no. 2 (June 2015): 165–93.

<sup>99</sup> Scott Stephen, "Master's and Servants: The Hudson's Bay Company and Its Personnel, 1668-1782" (Phd Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2006), 8.

<sup>100</sup> Gibson, *Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, 18, challenges Bumsted's observation that Red River "lacked a political dimension," and rather argues the problem was competing claims of "several different legal structures."

The matrilineal family defined the relationship to the land.<sup>101</sup> This matrilineal residency pattern was a key basis of Métis practices of “living on the land.”<sup>102</sup> As Métis scholar Nathalie Kermoal argues, Indigenous epistemological systems are rooted in female knowledge and experience of the land, and understanding of place needs to be linked to social, economic, political, environmental, and cultural processes.<sup>103</sup> The knowledge of how to “live on the land” was gendered, and Red River women contributed to cultural continuity through sharing “specific knowledge of resources that allow[ed] for the survival of the household.”<sup>104</sup> The act of marriage brought Jean-Louis into the Lagimodière household and tied him to their land in a way that rippled through all aspects of family life. As Brenda Macdougall writes, “Metis society emerged and gained strength because of its connection to Indigenous worldviews that were predicated on the children’s ancestral connection to the lands of their female connections.”<sup>105</sup> Julie Lagimodière, as the inheritor and manager of land, provided the groundwork for Métis territorial sovereignty and nationhood. Lagimodière land was key to Jean-Louis Riel’s career and leadership in the community. It was also the source of Louis Riel’s sense of belonging—what nineteenth-century Victorians might call “home.”<sup>106</sup> As Riel stated at his defence trial in 1885, in his richly flamboyant manner,

Today, although a man I am as helpless before this court, in the Dominion of Canada and in this world, as I was helpless on the knees of my mother the day of my birth. The North-West is also my mother, it is my mother country and

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<sup>101</sup> “Matrilocality refers to household residency. In a matrilineal culture, women remain in their mother’s household after marriage, along with her husband and children. Sons move out of their mother’s household after marriage to join the household of their wife’s family.” Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 57.

<sup>102</sup> Laura Peers and Jennifer S.H Brown, “There Is No End to Relationship among the Indians’: Ojibwa Families and Kinship in Historical Perspective,” *The History of the Family* 4, no. 4 (December 1999): 529–55.

<sup>103</sup> Nathalie Kermoal and Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, eds., *Living on the Land: Indigenous Women’s Understanding of Place* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2016).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>105</sup> As Brenda Macdougall as shown for the Métis families of Sakitawak in the English River district, residency was female-centred or matrilineal. *One of the Family*, 44.

<sup>106</sup> See the discussion of “home” in Adele Perry, “‘Is Your Garden in England, Sir’: James Douglas’s Archive and the Politics of Home,” *History Workshop Journal* 70, no. 1 (September 2010): 67–85.



although my mother country is sick and confined in a certain way, ...I am sure that my mother country will not kill me more than my mother did forty years ago when I came into the world, because a mother is always a mother, and even if I have my faults if she can see I am true she will be full of love for me.<sup>107</sup>

The new forms of authority thus overlapped with and even reinforced social practices which the community had long respected. The family was the primary public institution in the Métis community. Being “one of the family” was at the centre of social relations and the root of political sovereignty.

### **1.3 The rule of law and the Sayer resistance**

A bulwark of British imperial ideology especially in the nineteenth century was the “rule of law,” and legal reform was one of the most durable forms of colonization.<sup>108</sup> This too was a play for hegemony, with the state attempting to draw the community into their institutions through idioms of “fairness” and justice. By participating in their “civil duty” subjects would promote state authority. There was however a tension between the discourse of liberalism and “civilization” that informed imperial rule. On the one hand, this discourse was about pedagogy (a discipline) teaching them how to be British subjects, on the other, it encouraged ideas about political rights designed to prevent domination. Like the Canadiens studied by Donald Fyson, the Métis quickly realized that the courts could serve their own interests.<sup>109</sup> Faced with the institutions of British rule the Métis developed their own organic understanding of their rights as British subjects that they deployed in defence of their own autonomy. The following pages return to research presented by William Morton and James Bumsted, though my retelling emphasises in greater detail Jean-Louis’ role and insists on his role as an important leader at this juncture in the

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<sup>107</sup> Riel, “Address to the Jury,” doc. #A3-012, in *CWLR*, 524.

<sup>108</sup> Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, *Rage for Order: The British Empire and the Origins of International Law, 1800-1850*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>109</sup> Fyson, *Magistrates, Police and People*, 184–226.

development of the settlement.<sup>110</sup> Darren O'Toole's dissertation also repeats many of these events, but he is more interested in the role of republican rhetoric.<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, my argument is that these actions were not merely instances of resistance by the Metis, but attempts to make the state work for them. Furthermore, as I argue a key reason for their success in this effort was a shifting of ideas at the metropole about the necessity of "civilization" for legitimate governance.

Following the legal reform initiated by Adam Thom in 1839, both English and French speakers sat on juries. Jury duty could be considered another form of "ruling by schooling."<sup>112</sup> It should be noted that it was Thom who persuaded Durham that "the greatest kindness to [Canadiens] would be to initiate them into the blessings of English civilisation by gradually making them into Englishmen."<sup>113</sup> By participating in the court process, and other institutions of state authority, the Métis illustrated their increasing willingness to work within the nascent state systems to achieve their goals. As a leading citizen Jean-Baptiste Lagimodière was called upon to sit on the juries in the 1840s. His son-in-law would likewise be drawn into the operations of the state, but in a much more contested fashion.

Thom's legal reform relied upon "humanitarianism" and "civilization" to justify the imposition of British justice in an "uncivilized" land.<sup>114</sup> This argument resonated with ideas about international law at the heart of empire. Reformers, such as John Stuart Mill, desired an empire that would be a force for "civilizing" the world. While older ideas about the "law of nations"

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<sup>110</sup> Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations*. Morton, *Manitoba*.

<sup>111</sup> O'Toole, "The Red River Resistance."

<sup>112</sup> Following Bruce Curtis's phrasing this was another strategy of government rule by the production of political subjects or "anchoring rule in an enriched interiority." *Ruling by Schooling Quebec: Conquest to Liberal Governmentality - A Historical Sociology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 9.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Stubbs, *Four Recorders*, 32.

<sup>114</sup> Elizabeth Elbourne, "Violence, Moral Imperialism and Colonial Borderlands, 1770s–1820s: Some Contradictions of Humanitarianism," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 17, no. 1 (2016); Penelope Edmonds and Anna Johnston, "Empire, Humanitarianism and Violence in the Colonies," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 17, no. 1 (2016).

continued to challenge this ideal, the Victorian imperial mission increasingly rejected arguments that uncivilized nations were capable of being held accountable to international justice.<sup>115</sup> In the 1840s, Red River courts started to hold Indigenous people responsible for crimes against British law. The first case of state violence against Indigenous crime makes clear the reasons for this extension of jurisdiction. Adam Thom argued that, beyond the rights of the Company, “what is far more consistent with both humanity and with justice,” was to seize “any Indian, who may have injured us even within the territory of his tribe.”<sup>116</sup> The crime took place during a diplomatic meeting between Sioux and Saulteaux communities in Red River. Capennesseweet, a visiting Saulteaux, fired at close range killing a visiting Sioux and, apparently by accident, a resident Saulteaux.<sup>117</sup> The execution of the first “Indian” was public and watched by more than one thousand people.<sup>118</sup> We should consider that Jean-Louis and Julie heard of it and understood the implications of the increasingly long arm of the law and state violence. During the 1840s, British law increasingly provided security that was not unwelcome and the Métis were willing to participate in the justice system. However, Métis also viewed themselves as *otipemishwak*, or the people that own themselves.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, only a few years later, there was stiff resistance to the monopoly rights of a British company that administered that law when they conflicted with Indigenous people’s right to free-trade.

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<sup>115</sup> Jennifer Pitts, “Boundaries of Victorian International Law,” in *Victorian Visions of Global Order*, ed. Duncan Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 67-89.

<sup>116</sup> Russell Smandych, “The Exclusionary Effect of Colonial Law: Indigenous Peoples and English Law in Western Canada, 1670-1870,” in *Laws and Societies in the Canadian Prairie West, 1670-1940*, ed. Louis A. Knafla and Jonathan Swainger (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 130.

<sup>117</sup> “The Public Interest Vs. Capennesseweet,” in Gibson, *General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia Annotated Records, 1844-1872*, 17-23.

<sup>118</sup> Ross, *Red River Settlement*, 332.

<sup>119</sup> “Métis understood themselves as being both natives of the country and the descendants of the original lords of the soil, a reality that entitled them to specific privileges such as a share in land title with their Indigenous kin and the ability to exist independent of Company authority.” Gaudry, “Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk - ‘We Are Those Who Own Ourselves’: A Political History of Métis Self-Determination in the North-West, 1830-1870,” 184.

Governor Christie's first attempt in 1844 to put a stop to the "smuggling" of furs was only part of a broader attempt to increase the rationalization and efficiency of the state. As Hargrave writes, these high-handed actions "gave rise to much dissatisfaction among the people and engendered a strong and general feeling of dislike against the responsible adviser of the authorities."<sup>120</sup> In August 1845, a group of prominent Métis addressed "Fourteen questions" to Governor Alexander Christie, regarding their rights as "natives of the country."<sup>121</sup> Then in 1845 John McLaughlin forwarded the first petition from 1,250 half-breeds and Canadiens to the American government. The primary principle behind these claims was that they were "fils du pays."<sup>122</sup> Public meetings were held at the store of Andrew MacDermott throughout 1846.<sup>123</sup> Accused of causing civil disorder Macdermot defended himself by saying that Belcourt had organized the meetings and identified the main speaker as "Lagimodière's son."

At a meeting on 1 June 1846, a committee was formed to organize a petition. It consisted of William Dease, J. Baptiste Payette, J. Louis Riel, Charles Montigny, and Cuthbert McGillis.<sup>124</sup> The petition mentioned "un manque de confiance" and a "disposition des esprits, si dangereuse à la paix et la tranquillité publique". They demanded "Comme sujets Britanniques, nous désirons ardemment être gouvernés d'après les principes de cette constitution qui rend heureux tous les nombreux sujets de notre auguste Souveraine."<sup>125</sup> The petition with 977 signatures was forwarded by Father Belcourt to Alexander Kennedy Isbister to be presented in February 1847 to the British

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<sup>120</sup> Hargrave, *Red River*, 88-91. Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 43.

<sup>121</sup> Gaudry, "Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk - 'We Are Those Who Own Ourselves'," 187-94.

<sup>122</sup> As Métis Elder and storyteller Ron Evans explains, for the Métis the relationship to the land is actually reversed, the Métis did not own the land, but were owned by it. "Riel and the Rebellion" at McGill University in the Fall of 2015.

<sup>123</sup> For more information on these meetings of see Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*, 111. Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations*, 99. Morton, *Manitoba*, p. 75.

<sup>124</sup> Alexander K. Isbister, *A Few words on the Hudson's Bay Company: with a statement of the grievances of the native and half-caste Indians, addressed to the British government through their delegates now in London* (London: C. Gilpin, 1846), 9-13

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

Parliament.<sup>126</sup> Isbister was a Red River born Métis who had been sent to Scotland and trained as a lawyer. He was one of the most vocal critics of the HBC government and, as he wrote to Gladstone, he “sought to remove the unworthy and undeserved imputation that the inhabitants of the Red River Settlement were turbulent, lawless and disloyal.”<sup>127</sup> The petitioners prayed for the security of a “wise and paternal Government distinguished for its attachment to a liberal policy.”<sup>128</sup> The Métis had coupled their demands for rights as “sons of the land” with the argument that they were British subjects. This adept handling of legal concepts highlights the tensions between humanitarianism and imperialism—in effect the Métis were claiming to be civilized and deserving the protection of civil law.

Faced with the charge from HBC Governor George Simpson of spreading sedition, Belcourt defended his own actions as pacifying a potentially explosive one:

Now I consider the British Laws, and I confess that in my ignorance I can see no where that to make a petition to the Government is an unlawful proceeding I do not intend by this to make an apology of my conduct, not in the least, I am not sorry of it. I trust that I have saved many lives, what I have done, I have done it conscientiously for the common welfare without minding to be blamed or approved; as for the orders of the archbishop of Quebec, his will is certainly not to oblige me to be in good union, with some officers of the Company in spite of my public duties.<sup>129</sup>

On 10 June 1846, Governor Christie wrote that he believed Belcourt was encouraging the Métis to “declare themselves free”.<sup>130</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> Belcourt again responded, insisting that there had been talk of public disorder and breaking open the jail to release prisoners, but that his presence had resulted in a peaceful protest and a petition: “now Sir, to conclude, that this meeting have been a riotous meeting, an unlawful meeting is nothing but incorrect and malicious.”<sup>131</sup> He

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<sup>126</sup> Barry Cooper, *Alexander Kennedy Isbister: A Respectable Critic of the Honourable Company* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988), 107–39.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>128</sup> Isbister, *A Few Words*, 4.

<sup>129</sup> 6 June 1846, Council of Assiniboia Correspondence MG2 B5, PAM.

<sup>130</sup> 10 June 1846, Council of Assiniboia Correspondence MG2 B5, PAM.

<sup>131</sup> 16 June 1846, Council of Assiniboia Correspondence MG2 B5, PAM.

defended his actions also to his superiors in Quebec, “le seul moyen efficace d’appaiser le trouble que[?] de faire une pétition.”<sup>132</sup> Métis governance based upon *otipemiswak* was being channelled by the Catholic priest into modes of government correspondence which could be seen as legitimate (and therefore challenging to the colonial authorities).

Little came of the petition, but Governor Christie’s attempts to break up the “unlawful” meetings were futile and their frequency shows that HBC authority was in limbo.<sup>133</sup> In the political contests of the 1840s Simpson’s arguments about the welfare of the “public” were seen as hollow—the HBC government had been exposed as the private interest of a monopolistic company. Another sign of the change was that Simpson could no longer rely on brute force to have his way. Despite the arrival in 1846 of 383 British regular soldiers from the 6<sup>th</sup> Royal Regiment, supposedly sent to supervise the implementation of the Oregon treaty, the government was unwilling to put down the protest with force.<sup>134</sup>

By 1849, the official government and popular opinion came to a head. In a remarkable display of legal prerogative, likely justified by the “humanitarian” need to order the lawless frontier, William Sayer and two others were seized by the government Sheriff and were charged with illegal trading in contravention of the HBC monopoly. Activists immediately rallied behind the accused and threatened violence should he be convicted. According to correspondence between Alexander Christie and Governor Simpson, Jean-Louis Riel was the focal point of the discontent. Belcourt confirms this when he reported that Jean-Louis Riel threatened to have the

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<sup>132</sup> “Belcourt to Secretary Cazeau, 27 July 1846,” Provencher Correspondence: Lettres de M. G.-A. Belcourt, Vol II, SBHS #3469-3477.

<sup>133</sup> Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations*, 97–102.

<sup>134</sup> Alexander Ross was optimistic about the influence that regular troops would have on the settlement, “The presence of the red coats has made us draw in our horns like so many snails. The laws are respected, no mob-meetings, no plots, no threats, no illicit smugglers, no fur-traders.” Quoted in *Ibid.*, 106. But Ross’s claims about force and social order ring hollow in the light of the continued agitation, and the unwillingness of the Governor to use the troops for the suppression of unrest.

judge killed or set adrift in a leaky canoe.<sup>135</sup> On 13 May 1849, from the Church steps, and holding a letter from Belcourt in his hands, Jean-Louis urged the Métis to defend Sayer, by arms if necessary.<sup>136</sup> Jean-Louis's willingness to use Belcourt's correspondence to agitate, illustrates again that the Métis were not easily cowed or manipulated by secular or religious authority. Following an unusually early Mass, the Métis of St. Boniface crossed the river, pressing all available boats and canoes into service to gather in front of the court house at the Fort. The trial court records indicate that Sayer "failed to appear". Instead, "Delegates of the People" led by Jean-Louis Riel offered to take his place. Judge Thom refused to receive them on the grounds that the court was established upon the authority of the HBC Charter and thus had rights "set aside". James Sinclair, the man appointed by the Métis to represent their interests, responded that "many eminent characters in the Houses of Parliament in England entertained great doubts" about the validity of the HBC Charter.<sup>137</sup> He raised the stakes, by claiming this was not simply about illegal trading, but about the legality of the corporation versus the rights of individuals. "The Delegates of the People" challenged the Charter and the authority of the Company over the native rights of "freemen": "we, as natives of this country, and as half-breeds, have the right to hunt furs in the Hudson's Bay HBC's territories whenever we think proper, and again sell those furs to the highest bidder."<sup>138</sup>

Sinclair's reasoning opposed the Company rationale that it could represent the public and the state as well as its own capitalist interests. He exposed the divisions between the Company, the state and the public. Most important of all he came with the force necessary to back up that

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<sup>135</sup> "Les métis ont déclaré le commerce libre [et] exigé le renvoi de Adam Thom sous peine d'être noyé par eux." Letter from Bellecourt to Cazeau, 17 June 1849. #3497-3502, Provencher Fonds, SHSB.

<sup>136</sup> Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*, 114. It is important to remember that this is Christie's interpretation of the events and not necessarily an endorsement by Belcourt himself.

<sup>137</sup> "The Honble. Hudson's Bay Company v. Pierre Guilleaum Sayer" in Gibson, *General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia Annotated Records, 1844-1872*, 114.

<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations*, 99. See also Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 47.

claim. Thom was faced with the inevitable recognition that Métis controlled the court and threatened his own security. Finally, the judge compromised by allowing Sinclair to defend Sayer and to participate in the selection of the jury. According to Ross, it was only the calmness of Sinclair that prevented a bloodbath.<sup>139</sup> In an unprecedented course of action for the Quarterly Court, Sinclair objected to 16 jurors before proceeding. Despite these precautions, Sayer was found guilty of having infringed upon the rights of the HBC. However, according to the court transcript, after the verdict the foreman of the jury addressed the Chief Factor John Ballenden, to recommend mercy on the basis that “he and others were under the impression that there was a free trade.”<sup>140</sup> Ballenden, replied that “it was the principle” of the matter, not the value of the furs, and so he agreed to drop the charges. Whether it was the Foreman’s persuasive manner, Ballenden’s sense of justice, or the presence of a crowd of angry Métis, Sayer’s trial was a victory for the free-traders and the Métis. As Michel Hogue writes, “legal arguments over whether the Metis by virtue of their Indigenous ancestry, were bound by the HBC’s restrictions mattered less than the actual power of the Metis majority at Red River.”<sup>141</sup> The cry “Le commerce est libre!” was the manifestation of the Métis victory. Alexander Ross, a defender of the Company’s privilege, described it as a disruption of the “rule of law,” and was concerned about the impressions this would leave on the public: “the wisest proceeding had been to shut up the court and retire... In this struggle, legality in a certain degree, carried the day; but in such a way, that public opinion was left as dissatisfied on the point as before and the law as vague as before.” For Ross the Métis were a private interest masquerading as a public authority: “these deluded people have been incited and worked upon by disaffected demagogues.”<sup>142</sup> Despite

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<sup>139</sup> Gibson, *General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia Annotated Records, 1844-1872*, 117.

<sup>140</sup> “The Honble. Hudson’s Bay Company v. Pierre Guilleaum Sayer,” 116

<sup>141</sup> Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 47.

<sup>142</sup> Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement*, 372-386.



Ross's complaint it was clear that the Company could no longer claim to represent the public interest, and, from here on, the Métis would use the authority of the "public" to advance their own claims. As W.L. Morton argued, the Sayer case broke the Company rule and paved the way for a new sovereign power: "the crumbling of the commercial monopoly ... made the advent of self-government inevitable."<sup>143</sup> The Company would continue to pretend its authority remained intact for almost two decades, but it was now forced to recognize that the hegemonic Métis were learning how British ideas of justice could serve their own purposes.

Perhaps Jean-Louis's demagoguery was too much for Governor Simpson who had a long memory. Jean-Louis continued to be marginalized by the Company elect, even if his leadership within the Métis community was well established. Instead Simpson sought to shore up the ranks by co-opting the more moderate Métis ("respectable Canadien halfbreeds") like François Bruneau in 1853 as well as Pascal Breland, Salomon Hamelin, and Maximilien Genthon in 1857.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, the contest might have continued but for the intervention of Louis-François Laflèche, who became Jean-Louis' champion and was able to negotiate Company support for Jean-Louis's milling enterprise.

As a consequence of his actions Jean-Louis had earned a such reputation that his mere presence was enough to embarrass or otherwise disrupt the official government. His appearance in court as a witness in *Foss v. Pelly* proved a debacle. In the spring of 1849, rumours circulated about an illicit affair between Sarah Ballenden, the English "halfbreed" wife of the HBC Chief Factor at Red River, and Captain Christopher Vaughan Foss, an Irish soldier. The gossip, spread by white non-Indigenous wives of traders, was that Foss's attentions to Lady Ballenden were "of

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<sup>143</sup> Morton, *History*, 78.

<sup>144</sup> Lionel Dorge, "The Métis and Canadien Councillors of Assiniboia," *The Beaver*, Autumn 1974.

such a character as to entitle Mr. B. to a divorce.”<sup>145</sup> In July 1850, Foss determined to seek redress for damages to Ballenden’s reputation.<sup>146</sup> The upshot was a phenomenal public scandal, a drama of “she said-he said,” which James Ross, an advisor for the defence, only encouraged. This famous case has been studied by other historians, who have discussed its racial, class, and religious aspects.<sup>147</sup> This legal case also highlights how the new politics emerging in Red River were inflected by gendered racism.

In their defence Pelly and Andersen called upon “Louis Reill dit L’Ireland” as their first witness. Riel had no knowledge of Ballenden’s activities and his statements had no direct bearing on the relationship; Pelly had summoned him merely to detract from the reputation of the Judge Adam Thom. The transcript reads:

- Question – “Has any one ever spoken to you to request the Half Breeds to allow Mr Thom to sit as Judge on the Bench in this case?”
- Answer [Riel] – “On the 3rd of July I came here on the subject of our Petition. Mr Ballenden asked me if I had got an answer to it. I told him...”
- The interruption of the Plaintiff at this time, as well as the Bench prevented the Clerk from hearing further [how it pertained] to the business before the Court. Mr Pelly however persisted in putting the following question/
- Question – “Did any one offer a sum of money to the Half Breeds to permit Mr Thom to sit on the Bench.”
- Answer – “Never! never –“
- B-----/ The noise at this time in the Court was of such a nature as to bring Mr Sheriff Ross to address the people there in the court in a short and appropriate[sic] speech, which had the desired effect & business was resumed/<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Margaret A. MacLeod, ed. *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), 247. Quoted in Sylvia van Kirk “‘The Reputation of a Lady’: Sarah Ballenden and the Foss-Pelly Scandal” *Manitoba History*, 11 (Spring 1986). URL: <http://www.mhs.mb.ca>.

<sup>146</sup> He charged Pelly and Davidson with damages of £200 each, a vast sum in a period when most charges were £10-20. See Van Kirk “The Reputation of a Lady.”

<sup>147</sup> Foss was an Irish military man being slandered by English Company elites. Notably, Sylvia van Kirk and Fritz Pannekoek use this as a point of convergence for the increasing “strife of blood” in the previously harmonious community; according to Pannekoek in 1850 “the entire complexion of Red River society changed.” *A Snug Little Flock*, 119-142. Van Kirk “The Reputation of a Lady.” However, as Brian Gallagher, Norma Hall and Robert Coutts argue, the thesis of increasing racism within the community is overstated. In the trial transcripts one clearly sees the complex and overlapping alliances and crossing of racial and class boundaries. Brian Gallagher, “A Re-Examination of Race, Class and Society in Red River,” *Native Studies Review* 4, no. 1&2 (1988): 25–65; Sharron Fitzgerald, “Hybrid Identities in Canada’s Red River Colony,” *Canadian Geographer* 51, no. 2 (2007): 186–201.

<sup>148</sup> “Christopher Vaughan Foss Esquire versus Augustus Edward Pelly Esq & His Wife, John Davidson & his Wife,” in Gibson, *General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia Annotated Records, 1844-1872*, 153–54.

Riel's words are not further recorded. Pelly's insinuation that Thom sat only by grace of the Métis, who had possibly been bribed, had the effect of disrupting court decorum. Rather than try to refute the charge itself, Pelly critiqued the justice system and used Jean-Louis to disrupt the authority of the state and question the legitimacy of the Judge. Despite losing the case and being ordered to pay damages, Pelly had effectively demonstrated that the reforming Judge, the symbol of a civilizing and humanitarian empire was inadequate in the Borderlands context.

This was Adam Thom's last appearance as the official recorder for the Quarterly Court. However, his dismissal likely had more to do with the fact that in the summer of 1849 Jean-Louis organised a petition to have Judge Thom removed from his position as magistrate.<sup>149</sup> British justice could not be imposed without the support of the Métis, and particularly their leader Jean-Louis. On 1 May 1851, Judge Adam Thom's position as Recorder and Councillor was officially revoked, although he continued to participate in public affairs (the position of "Clerk of the Council" and "clerk of the Court" were created for him and he was given a commission to report on the state of the Laws).<sup>150</sup> Thom, failing to take the hint and gracefully retire, attempted to stay on. Governor Colville wrote to Simpson that in May 1851 he had met with Jean-Louis Riel who advised him that in their opinion the "people" would continue to oppose Thom.<sup>151</sup> Thom eventually left in 1854, and Métis hegemony in the colony was

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<sup>149</sup> "Petition to Gov. Simpson" 2 June 1849, Correspondence of Gov. Simpson loose inward correspondence Apr – May 1849, PAM. It was signed by William Memlen, Louis Rielle, Pascal Berlan, Baptiste Fairjeu, Baptiste Laroque, Antoine Morence, Louis L'etendre, Solomon [H]Amelin, William McMillan SS, Urbain Delorme. There is some discrepancy around the date as the Council minutes record a discussion of the petition in May. The council replied "...the personal liberty of Mr. Thom must be held equally inviolable with that of every citizen, and that those attempting any infringement on the same must bear the consequences." "Minutes of a Meeting of the Governor and Council of Assiniboia, 31 May 1849," in Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 352.

<sup>150</sup> Gibson, *Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, 123–24.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

symbolically recognized when the Council accepted a recommendation to never hold future court days on the anniversary of the Sayer Trial.

The petitions of the Métis to the Governor usefully reveal the interface, or the “public sphere,” between state and society that was quite familiar in the British World. Petitions were understood as a pressure-valve or “ventilator of grievances” used to legitimate government and prevent “despotic” authority.<sup>152</sup> Often seen as a sign of a healthy democratic environment, petitions have been associated with law and order,<sup>153</sup> but they are also a mark of citizenship and suggest a sense of belonging.<sup>154</sup> Group petitions are particularly representative of reflection, discussion, debate and even coercion.<sup>155</sup> For Gail Campbell, petitions offer insight into “the signatory’s knowledge of the way government worked, her degree of interest in the issues of the day, and her attitudes concerning those issues.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Stephen Watt’s work on petitioning in Lower Canada and Maine demonstrates the centrality of this practice to the exercise of citizenship in British political culture. “Duty Bound and Ever Praying: Collective Petitioning to Central Authorities in Lower Canada and Maine, 1820-1838” (Phd Thesis, Université de Québec à Montréal, 2006). See also Potukuchi Swarnalatha. “Revolt, Testimony, Petition: Artisanal Protests in Colonial Andhra” in *International Review of Social History*, 46 (2001) 107-128. Paul Pickering, “Loyalty and Rebellion in Colonial Politics: The Campaign against Convict Transportation in Australia,” in *Rediscovering the British World*, eds. Philip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 87-107.

<sup>153</sup> John McLaren, “The Uses of the Rule of Law in British Colonial Societies in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Law and politics in British colonial thought: transpositions of empire*, eds. Shaunnagh Dorsett and Ian Hunter, New York: Palgrave MacMillan: 2010.

<sup>154</sup> Lex Heerma van Voss argues “the right to petition could easily develop into a crystallization point for other popular rights” “Introduction,” *International Review of Social History*, 46 (2001): 3.

<sup>155</sup> While group petitions (akin to petitions of right) demand, personal petitions (petitions of grace) are “more akin to begging.” J. K. Johnson, *In Duty Bound: Men, Women, and the State in Upper Canada, 1783-1841* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014), 5–6. David Zaret, “Petitions and the ‘Invention’ of Public Opinion in the English Revolution,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 101, no. 6 (1996): 1499. See also Gohier, “La Pratique Pétitionnaire Des Amérindiens.” “La petition, en effet, est d’abord un geste vécu, par lequel des individus s’entendent pour exiger ou implorer *ensemble* l’obtention d’une faveur, d’un privilege ou la reconnaissance d’un droit. Dans ce contexte, le choix du sujet abordé, la façon dont les pétitionnaires se présentent, l’autorité visée par la requête ou la formulation des arguments ont autant d’éléments qui résultent, à un niveau ou à un autre, de réflexions, de discussions, de débats, de luttes et parfois même de coercion.” (6)

<sup>156</sup> Gail Campbell, “Disfranchised but Not Quiescent: Women Petitioners in New Brunswick in the Mid-19th Century,” in *Separate Spheres: Women’s Worlds in the 19th-Century Maritimes*, ed. Janet Vey Guildford and Suzanne Morton (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994), 39–66. As Gail Campbell points out in her study of New Brunswick’s women petitioners, petitions are evidence of alternative means of political participation for unenfranchised subjects.

Jean-Louis Riel became increasingly entangled in state institutions. For example on 19 May 1863 Philibert Laderoute charged Jean-Louis Riel with taking his horse.<sup>157</sup> Laderoute hired a lawyer, while Riel “conducted his own defence with skill.”<sup>158</sup> Remarkably, he even had his son, Louis testify in court. At nine years of age, this is the first documented instance of a public statement by the future “father of Manitoba.” Defending his father’s claim he stated “I saw this colt the first year: colour red, white front, white nose. [I] saw it last Christmas [and] knew it to be Defendt’s. I told my father [that from] the marks on the foal it is the same colt I saw young. I heard that my father had branded it. We could see the letter L plain, but it was too much burnt. I did not see the branding iron. I am sure it is my father’s colt.”<sup>159</sup> It is worth pausing here to note that the “L” was likely a reference to the Lagimodière name, another indication that property was labelled according to maternal ownership.

The broader point is that through their involvement with the British legal system, they demonstrate that they expected justice before a court and jury composed of their peers. Jean-Louis and his son, must have felt that they stood some chance of making the jury see their point of view. After all between 1852 and 1858, Jean-Louis served as a Jury member in “French cases” at least five times.<sup>160</sup> The cases ranged from breach of private contract to theft.<sup>161</sup> A survey of the Quarterly court records show that Métis also won their cases regularly.<sup>162</sup> Despite losing this

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<sup>157</sup> “Philibert Laderoute versus Louis Riel” in Gibson, *General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia Annotated Records, 1844-1872*, 423–25.

<sup>158</sup> According to the *Nor’wester*, which clearly was not biased in Riel’s favour. See the article “General Quarterly Court” June 2, 1863, p. 2.

<sup>159</sup> “Philibert Laderoute versus Louis Riel,” 424.

<sup>160</sup> See the following sessions of the Quarterly Court: November 18, 1852; August 1853; November 1853; August 19, 1857. Minute Books of Trials held before the General Quarterly Court, MG2 B1, PAM.

<sup>161</sup> He also appears on the payroll for jury members in the 60s. His name appears again March. See Sherriff’s Book (1863-1871) MG2 B4-2 PAM. Following the 1863 trial of Rev. Owen Griffith Corbett, jurors were paid for their services. This generated significant criticism and some suggesting that the jurors had been “bribed” to pass a verdict of “guilty.”

<sup>162</sup> Gibson, *Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, 339–65.

particular case, by participating in British legal institutions Jean-Louis was implicated more broadly at least in the functioning of state hegemony. As Donald Fyson has argued for French Canadiens encountering British justice in Lower Canada, a subject people were capable of claiming British law as their own and using it for their own purposes.<sup>163</sup>

Another outcome of the Sayer trial was that some Métis, particularly those from St. Boniface, felt that the older generation of leaders like Cuthbert Grant had failed to show their support for free trade.<sup>164</sup> Many, including Jean-Louis Riel, began to seek new leadership. The Sayer Trial was perhaps the climax of Jean-Louis Riel's political career. His son Louis wrote of it as a revolution:

A la tête de ce mouvement populaire était Louis Riel mon Père qui n'est plus de ce monde; mais dont je vois les vertus chrétiennes et civiques encore toutes en vie autour de moi. "Le commerce fut déclaré libre." L'étroite amitié dont mon regretté père était lié avec le Révérend Monsieur Belcourt lui permit d'accomplir cette importante révolution, sans aucune effusion de sang humain. ... O mon père, qui par votre courage et les lumières du Bon Sens, avez renversé un colosse d'iniquités, votre nom grandira d'âge en âge dans tout le Nord Ouest.<sup>165</sup>

Jean-Louis Riel's participation through petitions and public protests in the struggle to organize public order signals a much broader interaction with an increasingly influential state apparatus.

Jean-Louis Riel's leadership materialised in a context of a shifting colonialism that was increasingly oriented around ideas of settlement and civilization. The concrete implications of this were expansion of state authority and an increasingly masculinized public. In the new colonial context, the Métis leaders needed to use different strategies. The trajectory of state control however was complicated by the most important aspect of Métis hegemony; the

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<sup>163</sup> Fyson, *Magistrates, Police and People*, 360.

<sup>164</sup> William Morton suggests that Grant's stance on the Sayer trial led to discontent with his leadership. "The Battle at the Grand Coteau: July 13 and 14, 1851." Pannekoek speaks also of a shift in alliances between generations. *A Snug Little Flock*, 49.

<sup>165</sup> Riel "Second déclaration," doc. #3-151, in *CWLR*, 267. This fragment of a long letter held in the archives of St. Boniface Historical Society, is a copy of a now lost original.

borderlands remained a powerful check upon the aspiration of a settler state and were an important resource for the Métis in their struggle to defend their “rights”.

#### 1.4 Borderlands

The grey zone of jurisdiction between the Canadian and American state authority continued to play an important role in Métis calculations well into the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>166</sup>

While control of the border was essential for sovereignty neither Canada nor the United States could effectively claim it.<sup>167</sup> Recent scholarship, such as Michel Hogue’s, has pointed to the importance of a borderlands perspective to understand the strategies employed by the Métis.<sup>168</sup>

Jean-Louis Riel’s role provides details and links Hogue’s discussion of community formation to the argument here about state formation. As the following section above illustrates Jean-Louis Riel’s effectively contested state hegemony. Petitions show that the Métis used the borderlands to make claims, inserting own interests, into the claims making of competing nation states to carve out their own position as power brokers.

The Minnesota Historical Society, which holds the archives for the State of Minnesota, contains a copy of a petition translated into English for the Council and House of Representatives as well as the original in French.<sup>169</sup> This petition has not been treated by previous scholars of the Red River Métis or by Riel’s biographers. It was presented to the Minnesota

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<sup>166</sup> This section focuses largely upon the attempt to impose a political border by nation states, and the opportunities offered by the ambiguous spaces created in between, this implied a borderlands that often involved blurring of linguistic, religious, and identity boundaries. Recent studies of the borderlands draw attention to metaphysical as well as physical borderlands. Karl S. Hele, ed., *Lines Drawn upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borders and Borderlands* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), xix.

<sup>167</sup> Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 814–41.

<sup>168</sup> *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 55–99.

<sup>169</sup> “Message to the Council and House of Representatives in Relation to a Memorial from Half-Breeds of Pembina, Oct 1, 1849,” *Territorial Legislative Assembly Messages from the Governor*, J87.M61 Minnesota Historical Society.

Territorial Government on 1 October 1849 and was likely prepared shortly after the confrontation with Adam Thom in Red River. The original was likely drawn up with the aid of Father Belcourt<sup>170</sup> and contains the names of one hundred well-known Métis families. A note at the bottom of the document, signed by Belcourt, states these are “the principal hunters who have come home early, but their names represent the general will.” The second name on the list is “Louis Rielle”. The name above is Joe Rollette, otherwise known as “Jolly,” a well-established trader in the region, who, in 1851, would be elected to the Minnesota Territorial Legislature.<sup>171</sup> Rollette, like many of his generation, lived in the “borderlands” frequently crossing the invisible boundary between British and American territory: while he did business in Pembina and St. Paul, he married Angelique Jerome at St. Boniface and his children were educated in the British settlement. Rollette was the first Métis to sit in the American Legislature and he argued for extending the vote to the “civilized Indians” (and half-breeds).<sup>172</sup> That the names Riel and Rollette were at the head of the petition suggests their position as leaders of the community.

The *Memorial* sheds new light on the way the Métis community attempted to bargain for a better deal with the American government. It shows that far from merely resisting colonial control, the Métis were appealing for state institutions, likely as a means of controlling competing claims. First, the “Métis habitants de Pembina sur la Riviere Rouge” congratulated the governor of Minnesota on his new appointment and asked for his support against British

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<sup>170</sup> Letter from Belcourt to Cazeau 17 June 1849, #3497-3502 Provencher Fonds, SHSB. Belcourt speaks of having written to the Government of Minnesota requesting similar terms, a judicial court, troops and a land settlement. In 1848 Belcourt had established a mission at Pembina where, beyond the reach of the HBC government, he was more free to encourage the Métis agitation. William Morton, “Bellecourt, George-Antoine,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003).

<sup>171</sup> Rollette had close ties with the leading politicians and businessmen in Minnesota, such as Henry Hastings Sibley, Ramsay Crooks and Norman Kittson. He served as postmaster in Pembina, and as the American custom’s officer. See Hartwell Bowsfield, “Rollette, Joseph” *Canadian Dictionary of Biography*.

<sup>172</sup> For an overview of Métis voting in the United States see Jeremy Mumford, “Metis and the Vote in 19th-Century America,” *Journal of the West* 39, no. 3 (Summer 2000): 38-45.



incursions on their trading activities. The petitioners requested American protection against the British and:

- 1) Redrawing of the territorial lines;
- 2) Sale of lands to settlers;
- 3) Establishment of courts of Justice;
- 4) Exclusion of British Subjects from hunting on the half-breed lands;
- 5) Agreement by American and British government to ban “spirituous liquors”;
- 6) Establishment of a fort occupied by soldiers.

They protested violations of their freedom and accused British agents of abusing their power and seizing individuals in their own homes. Requesting a court of justice and a fort manned with fulltime soldiers shows their recognition of nation-state power. Finally, the demand that land be sold to settlers is significant in terms of state-building. The Métis clearly believed that they would benefit from this (although it is not entirely clear whether they would be buying or selling the land).

According to the Métis, the British had violated the “Laws of People” (droit du gens) as well as the “Laws of Nations” (droits des nations). It concludes:

If by your influence, and the great interest which you manifest for the good of all the inhabitants of the Territory you obtain for us these favours before two years are passed we are more than 5000 souls who escaping joyfully from the state of slavery in which they were held by a stern necessity will come here, to enjoy the sweets of Liberty to them at present unknown and who will consider you as their Liberator.<sup>173</sup>

The language is striking. Twenty years later Jean-Louis’s son would use similar expressions when he published the famous Métis *Declaration of Rights and Proclamation of the Inhabitants*

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<sup>173</sup> The original petition reads: “Si par votre crédit et le grand intérêt que vous portez au bonheur de tous les habitants de ce territoire, vous nous obtenez ces faveurs avant deux ans, nous conterons ici plus de 5000 âmes qui s’échappant joyeux de l’esclavage où il sont retenis par la nécessité et viendront jouir ici des douceurs de la liberté à eux inconnue jusqu’à présent, et vous considèrèrent[!] comme leur Liberateur.” The word Liberator is underlined in the original French. “Message to the Council and House of Representatives in Relation to a Memorial from Half-Breeds of Pembina, Oct 1, 1849,” *Territorial Legislative Assembly Messages from the Governor*, J87.M61 Minnesota Historical Society.

of *Red River*.<sup>174</sup> Darren O'Toole, who did not include this petition in his study, would have seen this as further evidence of a Métis political discourse informed by “republican” and “revolutionary” language.<sup>175</sup> The vocabulary (“Liberator” and “state of slavery”) might seem flamboyant but these phrases reveal the Métis flexibility with respect to political rhetoric. Borrowing from British, American and their own Indigenous languages, the Métis intellectual traditions of political protest emerged from the dynamics of dialogue and exchange in a colonial contact zone.

While Ramsay did not ultimately grant their wish, he admitted during negotiations with the Pembina Chippeway in 1851 that the Métis believed “it was they who possessed the country really and who had long defended and maintained it against encroachment of enemies.”<sup>176</sup> On 17 September 1849 Ramsay received a letter from Colonel W. Henry Sibley regarding the treaty terms. Sibley was particularly worried that the expectations of “halfbreeds” would make any attempt at a treaty fail.<sup>177</sup> Nevertheless, Ramsay was cautious and refused to deal with the Métis directly, whom he saw as “*quasi* citizens.”<sup>178</sup> Only at the urging of Pembina and Red Lake chiefs did he agree to an article that would have purchased the land along the Red River (3-4 million acres) for \$230,000 and set aside \$30,000 “to enable them to make provision for their half-breed children, and to arrange their affairs.”<sup>179</sup> Ramsay was willing to accept “any just and reasonable

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<sup>174</sup> “Declaration of the People of Rupert’s Land and the North West,” and “Proclamation to the North and the North-West,” docs. #1-023 & 52, in *CWLR*, 42–44.

<sup>175</sup> O’Toole, “The Red River Resistance.”

<sup>176</sup> Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 113–14.

<sup>177</sup> From W.H. Sibley to Ramsay, *Minnesota Governor, Records of Territorial Governor Alexander Ramsay (1849-1853)*. Sibley observed, “The whole thing has been badly managed, and I do not wish you to bear any of the *onus* of the failure. I hope therefore you will do only what you conceive absolutely necessary to be done, and no more...”

<sup>178</sup> These arguments reflect the same contest that Jeremy Mumford has described for Métis voters in the US Sault Saint Marie. See “Mixed-Race Identity in a Nineteenth-Century Family: The Schoolcrafts of Sault Ste. Marie, 1824-27,” *Michigan Historical Review* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 1-23.

<sup>179</sup> Ross, *Red River Settlement*, Appendix C: The Pembina Treaty, 411.

arrangement or treaty stipulation the Indians might choose to make for their benefit.”<sup>180</sup>

Alexander Ross who reported on the Treaty was disgusted with the Métis, or as he called them “Pembina squatters,” because of their association with opportunistic Americans.<sup>181</sup> Indeed, William Watts Folwell argues, based upon a letter from Sibley, the cash to be paid to the Métis was likely destined for the American trader Norman Kittson.<sup>182</sup> While this treaty was scuttled by congressional opposition in the Senate, a later treaty, in 1863, provided for an annuity to be paid out over 20 years as well as the provision of 160 acres to halfbreeds who were “related by blood to the Chippewas and who had adopted the ‘habits and customs of civilized life,’ and were U.S. citizens.”<sup>183</sup>

It is useful to pause here to mention an important point about Métis rights claiming that emerges from this document. The context of *Memorial* hints at an interesting triangulation of relations whereby British and American authorities were carefully watching each other make their bargains and were adapting their terms accordingly. As Kappler’s collection of Indian treaties shows these arrangements with Halfbreeds were common in US treaties.<sup>184</sup> “Halfbreed” claims and rights were not a novel invention in 1869, much less that of Father Noel Ritchot, as Thomas Flanagan has argued.<sup>185</sup> The *Memorial* and other American treaties show that there was a long tradition of recognizing Métis claims on the American side of the border well before the

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<sup>180</sup> Quoted in Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 113.

<sup>181</sup> Ross, *Red River Settlement*, 407.

<sup>182</sup> William Watts Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, vol. I (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1921), 288.

<sup>183</sup> See “Treaty with the Chippewa-Red Lake and Pembina Bands,” Charles Kappler, Online: <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/>. Accessed 9 June 2017.

<sup>184</sup> Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*. For instance, the 1864 Treaty with the Chippewa makes provision for the issue of scrip to “mixed bloods in lieu of lands” Accessed Jun 9, 2017. For a more full discussion of this context see Karl Hele, “Is it marked in the Bible, that the English and American should draw a line and do what so he pleases with the natives?: The 1850 Treaty as an International Document.” In *This is Indian Land: The Robinson Treaties of 1850* (Winnipeg: Aboriginal Issues Press, 2016), 91-136.

<sup>185</sup> For a fuller discussion of this point see Darren, O’Toole, “Thomas Flanagan on the Stand: Revisiting Métis Land Claims and the Lists of Rights in Manitoba.” *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 41, no. 1 (2010): 137–47

Canadian government made treaties on the Northwest plains. These claims emerged because Métis actively defended their interests and used the border to get what they wanted.<sup>186</sup>

The opposition of the American Senate to the 1851 treaty was largely due to the anxiety of opening new lands to the north, and the implications this would have on the precarious balance of slave states to non-slave states.<sup>187</sup> The political struggles in Minnesota foreshadowed the violent confrontations of “bleeding Kansas” that would lead to the Civil War.<sup>188</sup> In this context, the rather flamboyant use of the rhetoric of slavery in the 1849 petition was not overblown but calculated to appeal to vote-seeking Democrats.<sup>189</sup> In the shadow of the Sayer trial, the Métis were keenly aware of the need to harness the power of the federal state to bolster their own economic and political position.

This was not a new situation for the Métis who had seen their role as intermediaries between the British empire, the American Republic, and Indigenous polities increase over the years.<sup>190</sup> Numerous treaties and other correspondence document the relationship of the “halfbreeds” to American state development, particularly the scrip records.<sup>191</sup> The Métis claims took advantage of the contested nature of the borderlands, and they saw the American

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<sup>186</sup> According to Hogue the appearance of “American” Métis at the treaty negotiations in Qu’Appelle in 1874 shows that, “individuals were not terribly troubled by those citizenship requirements. Their personal experiences with treaty negotiations in the United States no doubt conditioned how such individuals as Ouellette viewed the Canadian negotiation,” *Métis and the Medicine Line*, 114.

<sup>187</sup> The Pembina Treaty was “sacrificed” in order to pass two other treaties with the Dakota to the South. For a full discussion of the negotiations and political interests in this debate see Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1921, I: 274–92.

<sup>188</sup> William Watts Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, vol. II (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1921), 10–12.

<sup>189</sup> Grant K. Anderson, “The Politics of Land in Early Dakota Territory: Early Skirmishes-1857-1861,” *South Dakota Historical Society* 9, no. 3 (Summer, 1979): 277.

<sup>190</sup> Allyson Stevenson, “The Metis Cultural Brokers and the Western Numbered Treaties, 1869-1877,” Phd Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2004. See also Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line*, 86–97; Schenck, “Border Identities.”

<sup>191</sup> See “Records Related to Mixed-blood Claimants under the Treaty Prairie du Chien” Microfilm #M550, and “Ottawa, Ojibway and Mixed-Blood scrip patent records” Microfilm #178, Minnesota Historical Society.

government as a potential ally in their attempts to negotiate the best deal.<sup>192</sup> The Métis leadership petitioned both British and American governments in their efforts to negotiate state power.

The implications of Jean-Louis's petitioning are manifold. As stated above, forming petitions was part of creating a political culture rooted in "public opinion." Further, publication of petitions, which was increasingly frequent in the post-1859 period, was part of a larger quest for legitimacy and authority of the state. As J.K. Johnson has argued for Upper Canada, the state mattered in the lives of ordinary people and petitions demonstrate how in early settler society many farmers and artisans turned to the state to support their livelihood.<sup>193</sup> Petitions also indicate a shift towards an increasingly masculine public, as women in Red River, at least officially, did not participate in petition-writing nor did they sign them.<sup>194</sup> Thus petitions provide an important source for demonstrating how the Métis understood the new social contract emerging between state and society. Finally, it is important to stress, petitions are not only "western" traditions, just because the Métis petitioned the government does not mean that they somehow lost their claim to the place which they called home.<sup>195</sup> The Métis, like many other Indigenous Peoples of North

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<sup>192</sup> For a discussion of the American aspirations to annex the Northwest see, Mary Wingerd, *North Country: The Making of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

<sup>193</sup> Johnson, *In Duty Bound*, 242–45.

<sup>194</sup> This should not be understood as a general rule for colonial societies. Marcia Schmidt Blaine argues in the case of non-elite colonial women "the individual who did [petition] knew petitioning could produce the results they desired. As members of society, as subjects of the British colonies, women, as well as men, took advantage of their opportunity to inform their government." "Women and the New Hampshire Provincial Government," in *International Review of Social History*, 46 (2001): 77. See also Campbell, "Disfrenchised but Not Quiescent."

<sup>195</sup> This point has been made in a number of contexts, for Great Lakes see Alan Knight and Janet Chute, "In the Shadow of the Thumping Drum: The Sault Métis--the People In Between," in *Lines Drawn upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borders and Borderlands*, ed. Karl S Hele (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), and Celia Haig-Brown, "The 'Friends' of Nahnebahwequa," in *With Good Intentions Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada*, ed. David A Nock (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 132–57. For South Africa see Elizabeth Elbourne, "Indigenous Peoples and Imperial Networks in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Politics of Knowledge," in *Rediscovering the British World*, eds., Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005). For the Lower Saint-Lawrence see Gohier, "La Pratique Pétitionnaire Des Amérindiens."

America used petitions as a means of informing colonial states of their interests and in defending their rights.

Strong cultural and political forces emanating from the eastern centres of Washington and Montreal would increasingly circumscribe Métis mobility. The French and Catholic ties would simultaneously justify and undermine Métis presence. The assertion of settler colonial control was not seamless and the potency of the borderlands remained an integral part of Métis political activity and political horizons. However, the Métis began to adapt themselves to the new context by taking up the seemingly mundane affairs of ordered settlement. The life of Jean-Louis illustrates this well. The next few years of Jean-Louis's career might seem anticlimactic compared to his confrontation with Adam Thom. He oversaw three mill projects and spent much of his energy in industrial development. However, the years 1850-63 are worth closer investigation as they reveal shifting political relationships and provide an explanation of the slow growth of state control. The humdrum affairs of a village miller reveal the seismic shifts in hegemony.

### **1.5 Jean-Louis Riel and the State**

Jean-Louis sought to set himself up as the first Métis miller in St. Boniface. The following section describes his involvement first with a Company owned fulling mill and a second private mill used to grind wheat and card wool.<sup>196</sup> The “miller on the sienne” was a public figure wielding political influence and had an ambiguous and sometimes contested relationship with the government authority.

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<sup>196</sup> Barry Kaye, “Flour Milling at Red River: Wind, Water and Steam,” *Manitoba History* 2 (1981).

In Red River millers had always been associated with leadership. Barry Kaye writes, that the first millers were “settlers of energy and some entrepreneurial ability who were trying to escape the stifling economic restraints [...] The milling business was one avenue of economic advancement. Included amongst the settlement’s millers were some of the most eminent citizens at Red River, men who were involved in a variety of vocations other than agriculture.”<sup>197</sup>

Cuthbert Grant became in 1829 one of the first millers in the settlement, when he erected a Water Mill on White Horse Plains.<sup>198</sup> Like other “developers” across British North America, they saw the state as a means to an end and likewise governments took an increasing interest in them.<sup>199</sup>

This industry was made possible by a state that encouraged increasing privatization of property.

Barry Kaye writes, “[t]he Orkneyman John Inkster, for example, was a store owner, merchant, free trader and member of the Council of Assiniboia, as well as a miller. Andrew McDermot, the colony’s most prominent miller, was also a leading free trader, a shopkeeper, a freighter and a dealer in cattle. Narcisse Marion of St. Boniface owned “a shop of merchandise” and a blacksmith’s shop as well as a windmill.”<sup>200</sup> Despite contemporary claims to the contrary,

industrial development occurred in Red River. Much of the skepticism over Red River preparedness for industrial development originated in political debate: critics argued that the Company monopoly was “holding” back development. Americans for instance used a “discourse of disadvantage” for their own purposes, while advocates of crown colony status listed the

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<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* The toll on milling was between 1/9 to 1/10 of the grain’s value. Another important source of revenue for these men was the maintenance of roads, bridges and ferries. Such was the stuff of which one builds a state.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.* Grant’s enterprise was a frustrating one, and he abandoned it to operate a wind mill on White Horse Plains.

<sup>199</sup> For a useful discussion of the role of modern liberalism and the development of industry in colonial margins see Daniel Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement: Liberal Government and Rural-Industrial Society, Nova Scotia, 1790-1862* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2008). Samson’s book explores the social dynamics that emerge as industrialists encourage privatization of commonly held property.

<sup>200</sup> Kaye, “Flour Milling at Red River.”

achievements of the settlers. Still others, like the “explorers” Henry Youle Hind and John Palliser had advanced their own agenda in communicating an image of an unsettled frontier.<sup>201</sup>

A Committee of Economy was established and made its first report on 27 June 1847. It had been established as part of Adam Thom’s reforms on 19 June 1845. The Committee’s purpose was to increase the quality and efficiency of local manufacturing. It purchased a fulling mill from England, and inquired into the cost of a small carding machine from Canada. It further offered a premium of £10 to the “person who shall erect the first efficient mill, for the purpose of hulling barley and oats; provided his toll, for the first year, be such as the Committee of Economy shall approve of.”<sup>202</sup> By awarding cash prizes to persons who could produce high quality cloth, these banal improvements, seemingly small, illustrate the increasing interest of the local state in developing the manufacturing and milling midway through the nineteenth century.

Riel briefly operated the Company’s fulling mill in 1847 on Lagimodière land at the junction of the Sienne and Red Rivers with the blessing of John Ballenden, the HBC governor. The venture was a failure because he lacked raw material.<sup>203</sup> Riel complained to the Council in a petition on 27 November 1851 of their failure to fulfil their end of the bargain or as he called it, *la non-exécution du contrat*.<sup>204</sup> Adam Thom, recently discharged of his duties as “Councillor” and now acting as clerk for the Council of Assiniboia, recorded that the petition “demanded indemnity for the occupation of his land by the fulling mill.”<sup>205</sup> Riel cast himself as a loyal public

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<sup>201</sup> Ted Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal: The Hudson’s Bay Company and Scientific Networks, 1670-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations*, 130–31.

<sup>202</sup> The “Committee of Economy” presented their report on the awarding of prizes in May 1847. Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 337–38.

<sup>203</sup> According to one testimony: “...quelques années après son mariage, Louis Riel fit un petit moulin à carder et sollicita l’encouragement de la baie d’Hudson pour cette invention...lui fit un accueil tellement froid qu’il renonça à son projet.” Quoted in Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910*, 2.

<sup>204</sup> “Meeting of the Council, 1 May 1851,” in Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 381–82.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* Thom’s bitterness over the past can be traced in his sarcastic interpretation of the petition as a “demand” as, in other instances, he writes “read a petition”.



servant who had incurred his own expenses, while the Company had not fulfilled its end of the bargain—that any cloth purchased by the Company would be properly cleansed and thickened at the mill. He concluded, “pendant un an je me suis interdit toute absence et frusté de certains bénéfices d’occurrence, ce qui est devenue pour moi une préjudice, et semble me donner droit à une indemnité, attendu que mon industrie ne m’a rien apporté pour que la promesse de M. Ballenden n’a point été remplie.”<sup>206</sup> The response of the Council, carried unanimously, was only that the petition had demonstrated “no clear ground of claim.”

One year later, in December 1852, undaunted by his failure, but more cautious, Riel wrote a letter in English proposing to buy the mill and the building, but not the fulling irons (tenterhooks) for £15: “Gentlemen, Your fulling mill has not been employed once since five years, and as there is not appearance of more encouragement for the future ... I am about to build a water mill on the River La Seine, that building would suit me well to that purpose.”<sup>207</sup> Thom’s absence seems to have worked in his favour and the Council resolved to appoint a committee to arrange the sale. The committee included A.A. Taché, the Bishop of St. Boniface, Dr. Bunn, and Père Laflèche. It agreed to Riel’s price and even agreed to pay Riel one pound for the labour of removing the irons.

According to tradition “Riel devised the new mill to card wool and also to grind grain, and that he dug a canal about ten or twelve miles in length from the Rivière à la Graisse to the Seine in order to ensure an adequate supply of water.”<sup>208</sup> This ditch, 12 miles long, would have been a considerable feat.<sup>209</sup> Riel continued to seek patronage and, by 1854, he wielded enough

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<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> “Meeting of the Council, 9 December 1852,” in Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 388–89. He likely had the support of Père Laflèche, the parish priest for St. Norbert and an appointed councillor.

<sup>208</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 17.

<sup>209</sup> Kaye, “Flour Milling at Red River.”

political leverage to receive it. The Company loaned him one hundred pounds “in the security of his water mill across the Riviere la Seine” and in the autumn of 1858 was sending wheat to “Larjemonier’s mill.”<sup>210</sup> The name Lagimodière suggests that the operation was identified as part of that larger family network. A comparison of his account books with other larger entrepreneurs between 1853-63 suggests that he did better than other millers. A letter to Bishop Taché in 1862 provides the following account “...J’ai fait bien peu pendant l’automne avec mon moulin car la sécheresse a été extrême. Cependant je dois [être] content du peu que j’ai fait les autres moulins faisant moins que moi. Le blé me venait de toute part de manière que l’eau m’a manqué avant le blé.”<sup>211</sup>

By 1858, things were going so well that Riel began to build a textile mill. The Bishop A.A. Taché promised £500 for the building.<sup>212</sup> Riel also gained the support of Henry Fisher, Charles Larance, and Pierre Gladu who agreed to share the cost of importing a machine, (likely for carding wool) from Canada.<sup>213</sup> Early in 1858, he travelled to Montreal with Bishop Taché’s blessing to visit the seigneuresse of Terrebonne, Madam Sophie Masson. There he purchased a “magnificent machine” for only £200 and shipped it to St. Paul. To show the relative strength of Riel’s ties to persons of influence and authority, it is useful to contrast Riel’s success in forming a “company” with the fortune of the Red River Steam Mill Company. Formed in the winter of 1855-56, this company applied for a grant of £100 from the Council of Assiniboia in May 1859.<sup>214</sup> Despite the fact that Inkster was an appointed member of the Council he could not gain the support of the Métis party, Solomon Hamelin, Pascal Breland, and Maximilian Genton. His

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<sup>210</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> For his account books and the letter see Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910*, 7.

<sup>212</sup> Raymond Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface the “Good Fight” and the Illusive Vision* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003), 56.

<sup>213</sup> Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910*.

<sup>214</sup> “Meeting of the Council, 12 May 1859,” in Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 449–51.

petition was deferred to the next meeting where Andrew McDermot, the competition, sent another letter stating that he was already importing a steam mill at his own expense. Shortly after, Inkster's petition was rejected four to seven.<sup>215</sup>

Riel's textile mill never made it to Red River settlement, likely because of financial constraints. After Riel's death in January 1864, someone in his family, likely his widow, sold the machine. (His death was unexpected as he was only fifty-three.) It continued to be operated by his brother-in-law Benjamin.<sup>216</sup>

Mills (wind, water, or steam) are indicators of industry and specialization. The diversion and damming of rivers for water mills represents a form of industrial power essential to the advancement of industrial and capitalist markets. However, if the mill was a sign of progress and was supported by state-sponsored improvements, it was also a site of political ferment. The miller was the agent at the heart of this power relationship and symbolized an ambiguous position with regard to the sinews of power. Mills have historically functioned as a place on the peripheries of settled areas and beyond the gaze of power.<sup>217</sup> Riel's lot was on the outskirts of the parish; the *Annales* of the Soeurs Grises, recounting how in 1855 Mère Valade took advantage of Jean-Louis's mill, stress the distance that the nuns were required to travel each day.<sup>218</sup> As such, mills were also a site of sub-altern sociability. George Gunn recollected his father's mill in St. Andrews Parish as a meeting of all sorts, stating that men came "in squeaking Red River carts, in

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<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, 448–53.

<sup>216</sup> Joseph Tassé, wrote that the mill was being operated by Benjamin Lagimodière, "Les Canadiens de l'Ouest: Louis Riel, Père," 1. See also Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910*, 4–5.

<sup>217</sup> Ginzburg argues that in a primitive state of communications, like medieval Europe, the occupation of the miller was a place of meeting, of social relations and for the exchange of ideas. Ginzburg also argues that the miller was disconnected from the "anonymous mass of peasant" by his position as a kind of taxman. The dynamic of the miller and the community is one of connection and disconnection, which seems to apply to Riel here as well. Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-century Miller* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 120.

<sup>218</sup> Sister Cusson, "rendait en voiture au moulin de M. Louis Riel....elles revenaient tous les soirs pour repartir tous les matins" quoted in Payment, *Riel Family: Home and Lifestyle at St. Vital, 1860-1910*, 3.

skiffs, in dugouts and York boats, from all over the settlement. They were there from hand-to-mouth yokel of the neighbourhood with a single bag on his back, to the York boat brigades of the Hudson's Bay Company with hundreds of bushels."<sup>219</sup> It is not difficult to imagine similar scenes at Riel's mill: Métis farmers with their carts shuffling about on the soft ground muddied by the piss of their ponies.<sup>220</sup> As they waited for their flour to be milled they spoke about many things, and the miller too would likely have participated in these exchanges. The mill was a public space, and, while not exactly a Habermasian coffee-house, reflected many of the social dynamics involved in public exchange.<sup>221</sup> The mill was a place where political opinions and events were debated, ideas were exchanged and allies were found, even as it was funded by state capital.

Jean-Louis Riel's commercial enterprises implicated him in the building of the early colonial state and the Red River public sphere. As was the case in so many other societies, colonialism in Red River was not a clear instance of domination versus resistance. Individuals were involved in the process of creating a colonial state to various degrees. The process of recasting everyday life was an intricate mixture of state policy and the agency of individuals pursuing their own interests.<sup>222</sup> From the Sayer trial to state patronage, the relationship of the Riel

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<sup>219</sup> George Henry Gunn, "Down by the Old Mill Stream in Manitoba Sixty Years Ago" Quoted in Kaye, "Flour Milling at Red River."

<sup>220</sup> This phrase is inspired by Ginzburg's portrayal of the medieval mill. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, 119–20. "The mill was a place of meeting, of social relations, in a world that was predominantly closed and static. Like the inn and the shop it was a place for exchange of ideas."

<sup>221</sup> In fact, it may have been less regulated and more "public". Recent conceptions of the coffeehouse public sphere stress the restraint and exclusivity exercised upon free speech. "A powerful tension between accessibility and exclusivity runs throughout the social, the cultural, and the intellectual histories of the coffeehouse. This should make us think twice before we draw any immediate and unqualified associations between the development of coffeehouse society and the rise of an unfettered and unproblematic public sphere." Brian Cowan, "Mr. Spectator and the Coffeehouse Public Sphere," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no. 3 (Spring 2004): 345–66.

<sup>222</sup> As the Comaroffs argue, "Far from being a simple exercise in domination and resistance ... colonial encounters everywhere consisted of a complex dialectic... a dialectic animated less often by coercive acts of conquest, even if violence was always immanent in it, than by attempts to alter existing modes of production and reproduction, to recast the taken-for-granted surfaces of everyday life, to remake consciousness; a dialectic therefore founded on an intricate mix of visible and invisible agency, of word and gesture, of subtle persuasion and brute force on the part of all concerned." Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 28.

family with state authority was more ambiguous than has previously been acknowledged. Highlighting this ambiguity reveals the fine line between participating in and resisting the state, and allows us to query previous conceptions of his son's inimical relationship with state authority. Riel was not raised in a household that was dedicated to a struggle. Rather, his father's example taught him how the state could be his own tool.

There are deep roots to the Métis involvement with state authority, and many sought advancement within the state apparatus, for instance as road builders, government agents, surveyors, and census takers. These positions, or patronage, complicate our understanding of the Red River resistance of 1869. This was a well-formed civil society, embedded in a quasi-state that rejected the claims of an invading force. Inhabitants of Red River in the mid-nineteenth century were not steamrolled by state power, they were part of it.

## **1.6 A New Kind of Politics**

In Red River, public authority had always been a tense political dance between the colonial officials and Indigenous publics composed of a mixture of groups variously defined as French Métis, English Halfbreed, Cree, Sauteaux, and other peoples. However, by the 1850s, the Métis had become the proximate brokers of hegemony. The government, or rather the HBC which appointed the government, had been forced to accept that it could not rule by imperial fiat. Its presence, while welcomed by many, was only possible through the grace of the Métis. On 31 May 1849, the Council considered ways to “restore the tranquillity of the Settlement,” and agreed that Métis and Canadiens should be given a certain proportion of the seats on the Council of Assiniboia.<sup>223</sup> In, 1849 the Catholic Missionary Reverend Louis-François Laflèche was given a

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<sup>223</sup> Dorge, “‘The Métis and Canadien Councillors of Assiniboia’ [1835-1856].”

seat at the Council, as a representative of the French community, and in 1853, three “half-breed” councillors were appointed. The appointment of Métis councillors was delayed because Provencher cast doubt on the ability of the Métis. He wrote to Simpson on 27 June 1849, saying they were “not likely to enlighten greatly the deliberations of the Council, because they are not too educated...I propose the abbé Louis Laflèche.” Simpson passed on this recommendation to London: “[Mr. Laflèche] I consider a very fit person for the office being intelligent and apparently well disposed: the other [Métis] are ignorant and illiterate although represented by the Bishop as sufficiently intelligent to report to the French half breed the proceedings of the Council.”<sup>224</sup> The distinction between the Métis and French communities at this time was not entirely clear, and these appointments may have been an attempt to bring clarity to what was in reality a very mixed population.<sup>225</sup>

As imperialists like Adam Thom were marginalized, the Métis were drawn into the working of the state through networks of patronage. By the 1860s the Métis constituted a significant portion of the state personnel, serving as translators, ferry operators, bridge contractors, mailmen, and police. Now with ties to the state the Métis were less interested in government reform. The failed 1857 campaign for self-government provides a good instance of the Métis shifting allegiances. When Jean-Louis Riel withheld his support, the campaign to stir up “public opinion” proved a failure.

On 5 February 1857, the British House of Commons appointed a Select Committee, “to consider the state of those British Possessions in North America, which are under the

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<sup>224</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>225</sup> For a discussion of the blurred lines between identities along the border see Schenck, “Border Identities.” The increasingly hard division between French and Métis populations is a good illustration of the politics of racialization discussed, albeit at cross purposes to this discussion, by Chris Andersen, *“Métis”: Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2014).

administration of the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>226</sup> Critics charged the Company with exercising a monopoly in a tyrannical manner and preventing colonization and settlement. The Company replied with a denial of the first charge and a justification of the second. Their witnesses declared that the Red River Colony had been 'an unwise speculation' and 'had failed.' However, in the end, the pressure of Red River-born activist, and now Company critic, Alexander K. Isbister had had the desired effect, people in high places were interested in the affairs of this isolated community.<sup>227</sup> Chief Justice Draper was appointed by the Canadian government to watch the Select Committee's investigation. Newspapers like George Brown's *Globe* and William McDougall's *North American* attacked the HBC and urged the acquisition of the Northwest by Canada.<sup>228</sup> Coinciding with the Henry Youle Hind and John Palliser expeditions, this investigation signified for many that it was time for the colony to mature and throw off the shackles of Company rule. On July 24 Gladstone's motion "that the country capable of colonization should be withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the Hudson's Bay Company" was accepted by the deciding vote of the chairman.<sup>229</sup> For reformers in the colony, it seemed as if tyranny's days were numbered and soon a new government would be constituted.

In 1857, informed of this agitation at the heart of empire, William Kennedy, John Schultz, and other Canadian annexationists launched a petition to request responsible government for the colony, either as a crown colony or by joining with Canada. Kennedy was a Red River "Half-breed" who had been sent to Scotland for his education. Schultz was a Canadian

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<sup>226</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company: together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, House of Commons: August 1857, ii. The committee thoroughly discussed the whole of the HBC economy. According to Stanley, "Twenty-four witnesses were examined, 6,098 questions were asked, and evidence to the total of over 450 printed folio pages was compiled." *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 20–21.

<sup>227</sup> Cooper, *Alexander Kennedy Isbister*, 107–39.

<sup>228</sup> Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada*, 23.

<sup>229</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company*, xiv. It seems that Stanley made an error in his reading *Ibid.*, 21.

settler (and would become the principal antagonist of Louis Riel in 1869). A similar petition expressing the “views of the people of Red River” was printed in the Toronto *Globe*, the staunchly “reformist” paper of Upper Canada, an indication of its motivations.<sup>230</sup> Diverse members of the Red River settlement passed resolutions asking for an independent government at a series of public meetings. On 25 March 1857, Jean-Louis Riel presided over a meeting where Kennedy demanded an elected assembly and circulated a petition.<sup>231</sup> (His son Louis Riel would have been twelve at the time, perhaps preparing to leave for school in Montreal.) These petitions were sent to Canada with some 574 signatures praying for the development and annexation of the region. However, the number of signatures was too few. The movement lacked the critical mass of the Métis.<sup>232</sup> Jean-Louis Riel and many others had gradually shifted from cautiously supporting Kennedy to supporting the “old order”.<sup>233</sup> While George Simpson reported that the Métis and the clergy “warmly supported the constituted authorities during the ... agitation by Kennedy’s party,” he also smugly noted that the goals of the Métis had been met with the reform of the Council in the same year.<sup>234</sup> Simpson had another reason to be smug, a detachment of Royal Canadian Rifles from Montreal arrived in Fort Garry on 22 October 1857.

The Métis were not going to rest on their laurels. Distances were shrinking and time was speeding up as new methods of communication inaugurated a new era of globalization. In 1859,

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<sup>230</sup> “The Views of the People of Red River,” *Globe*, 12 March 1857, 2.

<sup>231</sup> O’Toole, “The Red River Resistance,” 117–19. Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations*, 128–34.

<sup>232</sup> According to Irene Spry the petition contains only 119 French names, and the Catholic clergy had voiced its disapproval. Irene M. Spry, “The Métis and Mixed-Bloods of Rupert’s Land before 1870,” in Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown, ed. *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 111.

<sup>233</sup> O’Toole, “The Red River Resistance,” 129.

<sup>234</sup> Simpson is quoted in Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations*, 129. Henry Fisher, French-speaking, was appointed in 25 June 1857. French speaking Métis, Pascal Breland and Solomon Hamelin were appointed on 19 September, as was Maximilien Genthon, a French speaking Canadien. These four plus the vote of Bishop Taché now constituted a formidable power in the government of the settlement. Dorge, “The Métis and Canadien Councillors of Assiniboia.”



the printing press and the first steamship arrived in Red River.<sup>235</sup> Increasing density of population and settlement lead to a proto-Urbanization (in 1850 there were 6,000 settlers, between 1850-70 there was a 100% increase in population). This meant increasing diversification of skills and new forms of association.<sup>236</sup> These developments had implications on the legitimacy of the official government and the relationship between state and society which would play out in the political culture of Red River. Jean-Louis would continue to play a part in keeping the Métis interests relevant to colonial governments.

The growing importance of “print media” would pose a significant challenge to Indigenous governance. The principal instrument of this new form of communication was the *Nor’wester*, “a disruptive force in an already unstable society.”<sup>237</sup> Its editor James Ross, and many of its readers clearly had a Protestant bias and wilfully attacked the Catholic clergy. In 1861, Jean-Louis Riel took up his pen to defend Father Oram, who had written a critical letter to the editor of the *Nor’wester* complaining about its anti-Catholic stance.<sup>238</sup> (Oram, for his part, refused to have anything further to do with the paper or the editor.) James Ross had trained as a lawyer in Kingston, and his superior education certainly meant that he had an advantage over Jean-Louis. However, this does not seem to have daunted the Métis spokesman, who challenged him to engage in the debate. However, James Ross used his control over the means of communication to mock Riel by publishing the letter as comic relief under the sarcastic headline “Cure for the Blues.” In the original French, “M. vous devez vous r’appeler de l’invitations que

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<sup>235</sup> “‘Each turn of the engine’, wrote Bishop Taché in 1870, ‘appeared to bring us nearer by so much to the civilized world.’” Quoted in *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>236</sup> As Norma Jean Hall points out the population numbers were informal and subject to manipulation to argue for or against encouraging settlement. Hall, “‘Perfect Freedom’: Red River as a Settler Society, 1810-1870,” 2. While it was a small settlement compared to the metropolis of Montreal (population 50,000), it served as the hub for trade in the region.

<sup>237</sup> Oram, *Promise of Eden*, 82.

<sup>238</sup> “The Nor’wester Viewed from a Catholic Standpoint,” *Nor’wester*, 14 August 1861, 3.

vou m'avez faites, d'ecrir ...j'espère que vous m'avez pas faites cette invitation pour vous moquer de moi.”<sup>239</sup> Evidently, the temptation was too great for Ross, and he made a spectacle of the poor punctuation and grammar and included a scathing commentary: “By his special request we give his French version an English dress, and if our translation shocks the grammar of our readers, we assure them it is at all events, a great improvement on the original—which for spelling, construction, syntax, and punctuation, would be considered a rare curiosity in any museum.”<sup>240</sup> He translated Riel’s French just to mock him, “...we esteem an open and frank enemy we can only condemn a disguised enemy you know better than nobody if you are one or the other but beware; he who sows the wind will collect the tempest and those who exhaust themselves in endeavours to trouble the harmony which has Reigned up to now in Red River place themselves in a position which for the least disagreeable.”<sup>241</sup>

Exposing Ross’s bias and his sarcasm does not do full justice to the ideological content of such a performance. Here, in the pages of the newspaper was evidence, or so Ross would have us believe, of the un-educated “half-breed,” confronted by the cultivation, intelligence, superior civilisation and, by extension, also political opinions of the newspaper editor.<sup>242</sup> Literacy was more than simply an intellectual skill, it was a mark of class privilege and of legal preference. Ross wrote:

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<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.* Ross translated this as “Sir, you ought to recall the invitation which you have made me, to write....I hope you have not made me this invitation to mock me...”

<sup>240</sup> “A Cure for the Blues,” *Nor’wester*, 14 September 1861, 2. The original letter is preserved in the Riel Collection at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba in Winnipeg. “Louis Riel Sr., St. Boniface, to James Ross,” September 10, 1861, D1 #3 PAM.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.* In the original French we read “nous estimons un ennemie ouvert et franc, nous ne pouvons que mépriser un ennemi déguisé vous savez mieux que personne si vous êtes l’un ou l’autre mais prenez y garde; celui qui sème le vent recueillira la tempête et ceux qui sépuisent en efforts pour troubler l’harmonie qui a Regné j’usquecie à la Riviere Rouge se placent dans une position qui pour le moins desagreeable.”

<sup>242</sup> Contempt for poor writing is a common form of elitism that serves to legitimize certain voices and to delegitimize others. The politics of civilized writing continues to influence modern readers who are often quick to pounce on the intellectual foibles of the dead. Maureen Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography* (Durham: University of North Carolina, 2004); Fiona Paisley and Kirsty Reid, eds., *Critical Perspectives on Colonialism: Writing the Empire from Below* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

How is it that such a one comes forward as Mr. Oram's champion? Is he head man among the French people? We regard as the leading men the Bruneaus, the Amelins, the Marions, the Gentons, the Ducharmes, the Fishers, the Deases, the Brelands, the Delormes and many others too numerous to mention; these are principal men and they are a credit to the Settlement; but as for L. Riel, pray, who or what is *he*?<sup>243</sup>

Jean-Louis Riel had attempted to defend the reputation of the Catholic priest whom he felt was unfairly attacked—this, his first venture into the printed “public sphere,” was greeted with all the disdain that Ross could muster. Ross's claim not to know Riel (whom he had encountered on many occasions) was intentionally misleading, a veiled attempt to assert his own exclusive access to “public opinion”. The newspaper article was an attempt to disrupt the authority that Riel's name carried in the Catholic and French-speaking Métis community and presumably to discourage further writing by Métis.

Métis public opinion had hitherto been formed largely through physical meetings: public gatherings, petition campaigns, court cases, trading posts, communal hunts, horse races and church events. The attack on Jean-Louis was likely so fierce because Ross knew that Métis were well aware that the printing press was a new medium already being used by Indigenous Peoples who recognized its power. Cree and Saulteaux groups took advantage of the pressures of the parliamentary investigation in 1857 and the arrival of the press in 1859 to publish their own demands regarding unresolved land claims.<sup>244</sup> In 1860 Chief Peguis, (Mr. King) presented his views in the pages of the *Nor'wester*.<sup>245</sup> Peguis' son (Henry Prince) and Donald Gunn, another prominent inhabitant, also wrote articles defending these claims.<sup>246</sup> Indeed writing was already an

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<sup>243</sup> “A Cure for the Blues.”

<sup>244</sup> “Letter from Peguis, chief of the Saulteaux Tribe at Red River,” See Appendix no. 16, *Report from the Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company*, 445-6.

<sup>245</sup> Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations*, 139–40.

<sup>246</sup> See the 15 April 1859, and 14 January 1860 issues of the *Nor'wester*. For the response see the letter by Andrew McDermot, retired HBC Trader of Lower Red River District “Peguis Refuted,” *Nor'wester* 28 February 1860. The same paper also reported on 1 June 1861 a petition sent by Kees-Kesuma-Kun [Keseekoowenin/ Moses Burns?] and Makasis Fox for recognition of their rights to “Indian title to their lands” and calling for a treaty. Norma Hall's

important part of Ojibwe and other Indigenous people's politics.<sup>247</sup> Peguis also posted written notices warning settlers not to cut hay beyond the limits set by the treaty. In *Red River Settlement*, Alexander Ross published a series of letters exchanged between the Sioux and the Half-Breeds in the winter of 1845-6.<sup>248</sup> Anton Treuer has also documented the increasing use of writing among the Ojibwe of Northern Minnesota.<sup>249</sup> Indigenous publics could easily accommodate printed media, and newspapers from St. Paul and public letters were read without displacing traditional strategies of the public sphere. Over time Indigenous peoples were increasingly pressured to forfeit their identity as "Indians" to gain access to the public sphere, and, as a result of their refusal they were ignored.<sup>250</sup> However, in the 1860s, colonial domination continued to be disrupted by Métis hegemony.

Initially, the editors of the *Nor'wester* had intended for it to become a lucrative paper of record, printing the affairs of the Council, as well as a forum for local news.<sup>251</sup> However, the paper was exceptionally good at making enemies: it criticized the established government, published racist and demeaning descriptions of the Métis, and was anti-Catholic.<sup>252</sup> Whether

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research on this topic has greatly facilitated gathering this information. See "Provisional Government of Assiniboia" URL: <https://hallnjean2.wordpress.com>, Accessed March 17, 2017.

<sup>247</sup> "His [Peguis] determination reveals that he was perhaps the first Native leader in western Canada fully to grasp the implications of coming change and mass white settlement for his people...In 1857 and 1859, he dictated two letters regarding the land situation, one to the Aborigines Protection Society and the second published in the British *Aborigines Friend and Colonial Intelligencer*." Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada 1780 to 1870*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 198.

<sup>248</sup> Ross, *Red River Settlement*, 324-330.

<sup>249</sup> It was not always to their advantage, in 1860 the very literal interpretation of the Treaty overruled Hole-in-the-Day's protests interpretation of the land cession as a loan. Anton Treuer, *The Assassination of Hole in the Day* (St. Paul: Borealis Press, 2011), 69.

<sup>250</sup> Konkle argues that the "enlightenment theory of Indian difference" was a form of intellectual blackmail which native intellectuals consistently refused. Konkle, *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography*.

<sup>251</sup> Bruce Peel, *Early Printing in the Red River Settlement 1859-1870* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1974); Gibson, *Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, 161-63.

<sup>252</sup> Alexander Begg reported on 10 November 1869, "our community has been cursed, instead of blessed, through the medium of the Press as it has been conducted in the Settlement. A one-sided, unpopular mismanaged sheet, in the interest of the clique [Canadianists]... has endeavoured to mislead the minds of the people abroad regarding the true state of affairs here." Alexander Begg and Joseph James Hargrave, *Reporting the Resistance: Alexander Begg and Joseph Hargrave on the Red River Resistance*, ed. J. M. Bumsted (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press,

because of ideological clash or a financial disappointment, it became the venue for criticism of the Company's administration of public affairs and was closely associated with a small but aggressive party sympathetic to Canadian annexation. As Alan Lester argues, this was a trans-imperial settler discourse that emerged in response to the humanitarian critique of settler practices.<sup>253</sup> However, the relationships between Riel and the press and between the press and the Company show that in Red River public discourse was more complex and often tied to local circumstances. At the same time, like the printers who represented the propertied and free settlers in Lester's colonial columns, the printers in Red River also found themselves ranged against interests of Indigenous peoples. Throughout the 1860s, the *Nor'wester* would publish multiple letters and support petitions for annexation,<sup>254</sup> but without the involvement of Jean-Louis Riel and other Indigenous people in the community it was doomed.

Indeed, this was a hollow victory for Ross. Real authority did not lie in the opinions expressed in his admittedly biased and racist newspaper. The Indigenous public sphere was larger than this. There were other modes of communication and means of expressive authority that would determine the relationship between state and society. However, the paper was a sign of transformations in Red River's political culture that had the potential to disrupt society. Whether Jean-Louis Riel, through his mill, or James Ross, through his paper, knew it or not, they were part of that shift.

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2003), 85. Begg himself was a partisan of the HBC, and treated the *Nor'wester* as an instrument of slander. Bishop A.-A. Taché also condemned the paper in his own letter, which was cheerfully published. "Course of the Nor'wester" *Nor'wester*, 24 January 1863, 2. The editors claimed, "his views on the Nor'wester will have no weight with our subscribers."

<sup>253</sup> "British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire," *History Workshop Journal*, 54 (2002): 26-48.

<sup>254</sup> For other petitions see *Copies of all Petitions that have been addressed to her Majesty or her Majesty's government from the Inhabitants of Red River District...from 1860 up to the present time*. Ordered by the House of Commons, 1870.

## 1.7 “We are at present without any armed force”

The lack of a professional police force continued to be an issue in the settlement and exposed the weakness of the government.<sup>255</sup> It was not for lack of local support; the problem was the unwillingness of the government to extend their public patronage. The Company likely believed that relying upon locals would cause them to become hostage to local opinion.<sup>256</sup> Alvin Glueck writes “The Hudson’s Bay Company hesitated to establish a local military force whose loyalty to its interests might not be as great as its devotion to the free traders of Rupert’s Land.”<sup>257</sup> But the government’s inability to secure the territory meant that Métis hegemony continued to disrupt Company rule.

Shortly after the commencement of the American Civil war, hostilities between the Dakota and US army deteriorated into a prolonged war. The results were disastrous for the Dakota.<sup>258</sup> In 1862, desperate and starving refugees began to appear on the edge of British North American settlements.<sup>259</sup> Métis camps quickly and efficiently made their own treaties of peace with the Dakota,<sup>260</sup> but in the settlement, the inaction of the Council only underscored pre-existing tensions between the government and public opinion.

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<sup>255</sup> In 1856 Alexander Ross again remarked on the need for a better police force. *Red River Settlement*, 365.

<sup>256</sup> J.M. Bumsted, *Trial and Tribulations*, notes that in April 1863 the Magistrates wrote to Governor Dallas that “it has become too evident that Military protection is as much required to keep down internal tumult, as to guard against Indian disturbances.” (167) Similarly, Stanley also sees unrest and lack of “an adequate force to back its administration of the law” as defining the years prior to the rebellion. He notes, however, that “the Council of Assiniboia proposed to enlist the services of one hundred special constables, but the proposal was, for some reason or another, never carried into effect.” *The Birth of Western Canada*, 51. See also Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*, 57; William Morton, *Manitoba: The Birth of a Province* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1965), 102.

<sup>257</sup> Glueck, Alvin C. “The Sioux Uprising: A Problem in International Relations,” *Minnesota History* (Winter 1995): 317-324.

<sup>258</sup> Gary C. Anderson, *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988).

<sup>259</sup> Roy Meyer, “The Canadian Sioux: Refugees from Minnesota,” *Minnesota History* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1968): 13–28.

<sup>260</sup> In 1862 at a peace council at Devil’s Lake the Métis and nine Sioux chiefs agreed not to fight or attack each other. David G. McCrady, *Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 20.

Seeing the need for military protection, in the fall of 1862, John Black, a Judge and Councillor for the Council of Assiniboia, organized a petition for British troops.<sup>261</sup> He put forward his petition to the British government requesting troops for the security of the colony at a public meeting—it was supported by the recently arrived Governor Alexander Grant Dallas.<sup>262</sup> James Ross, a well-known critic of the Company, refused to circulate the government petition and denounced it.<sup>263</sup> Instead, together with other opponents of the official government, he organized a counter petition “from the people” that framed the problem as a failure of responsible government.<sup>264</sup> London did not give satisfaction to either request. Unfortunately, for the Company, the problem could not be ignored so easily.

On 10 December 1862, Standing Buffalo, a Sisseton chief, appeared in Pembina with hundreds of others and elicited considerable excitement in the Red River Settlement.<sup>265</sup> Pembina was one day’s travel from Red River. A group of almost one hundred Dakota proceeded north where they met Dallas, Bishop Taché and nearly eight hundred Métis at the Rivière Salé in late December. It is probable that Jean-Louis Riel was amongst them.<sup>266</sup> This spot, defined by a river with steep banks, was a natural boundary for the Settlement. This was where the Métis would

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<sup>261</sup> The topic was first raised in a council meeting on 30 October 1862. Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 511–13.

<sup>262</sup> On October 30, 1862 Governor Dallas had suggested to the Council that they take steps to deal with the appearance of “Indians” next summer. The Council had appointed Col. Black to organise a petition “for the people to make known their desire to the home Government by Memorial or otherwise... It rested very much with the people themselves whether they were to have troops or not. The interests and welfare of the Company were to a great extent identified with those of the Settlers.” *Ibid*, pp 511-512.

<sup>263</sup> As a result of his political agitation Ross lost his official position as post-master. For his report on the Council meeting discussing the Militia petition see, “Important Meeting of the Council,” *Nor’wester*, 4 November 1862, 2.

<sup>264</sup> “Petition of the People of Red River Settlement to the Duke of Newcastle,” *Nor’wester*, 17 November 1862, 2. The *Globe* framed the Government Indian “scare” as a pretence. “Great Agitation in the Settlement,” *Globe*, 25 February 1863, 3.

<sup>265</sup> It is important to distinguish between the perceived threat, and the movements of real people from the Dakota and Sisseton nations, who would be more accurately known as Oceti Sakowin (translated as “seven council fires”). While in general I have use the term “Dakota” where necessary I have left the original “Sioux.” Where possible I have identified individuals more precisely.

<sup>266</sup> McCrady, *Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands*, 18.

successfully repulse William Macdougall, the Canadian appointed governor, on his attempt to enter the colony in 1869. The security of the Settlement was still dependent upon Métis military capacity, and the Governor was unable, through political will alone, to convince the Dakota to return across the line. Instead, Standing Buffalo observed a mass in St. Norbert Parish on December 27 and met officers at the Fort the next day. The Dakota departed for the American border without incident on December 31. The *Nor'wester*, quick to score political points, carried the following reaction: "We loath the very idea of the Hudson's Bay Company welcoming these wretches seeing that they are only just fresh from butchering innocent families in Minnesota... best means of getting us into a scrape with our Minnesota neighbours."<sup>267</sup>

In March 1863 the third petition, this from "inhabitants of Red River Settlement," requested funds and permission to form a local militia that would defend the settlement against the perceived threat of the Dakota.<sup>268</sup> This one is relevant because of Jean-Louis's participation. The petition requested "immediate enrollment of from two to four hundred volunteers to be formed into cavalry companies," and that "an agent be dispatched fast to effect the purchase or loan of the necessary arms and equipment."<sup>269</sup> The writers of the petition played upon settler fears of an "Indian" war, adding that the Saulteaux had also threatened to attack the settlement (certainly a strange alliance as traditionally the latter tended to see the Dakota as interlopers and their enemies):<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> "Sioux at Fort Garry," *Nor'wester*, 22 January 1863.

<sup>268</sup> "Petition to the Governor in Chief of Rupert's Land and the Council of Assiniboia praying for the formation of Cavalry Companies to protect the Colony on account of the hostile attitude of Sioux Indians," MG2 B2 88, PAM. There is some confusion over the date of this petition. The document itself contains no date, but the archive catalogue records it as 1864, yet a note on the cover-page of the document corrects it to 1863. According to the council minutes there were two petitions, one presented in 1863, and another in 1864. The latter was reported in the *Nor'wester*. The terms of this document match the earlier petition.

<sup>269</sup> "Petition ... praying for the formation of Cavalry Companies."

<sup>270</sup> The newspaper actively promoted this rumour. See "Communication with St. Paul Dangerous," *Nor'wester*, 9 February 1863, 3.



We are at present without any armed force and that with the arms now in common use[!] we could not make any successful resistance to an attack from a large number of Indians, many of whom are armed with the best long range rifles and revolving pistols and double barrel guns...[we] confidently anticipate the arrival of a British regular force, [but] at this critical juncture we confidently rely on the desire as well as the ability of your Honourable body to take wise, prompt and vigorous measures for the effective protection of the country. ...in duty bound will we pray.<sup>271</sup>

The idea that the government would pay for arms and horses was attractive to many Métis, who believed they might benefit financially from a government grant—the departure of the military was blamed as the principal cause of the shortage of specie. After all, they had been hiring themselves and their horses to the US military for years.<sup>272</sup> The politics of militia were the politics of patronage to the Métis. Four hundred signatures including that of Jean-Louis Riel were attached.

The remarkably diverse backgrounds of men who signed the 1863 petition illustrates a broad consensus. The names of “gentlemen settlers” such as Andrew MacDermot, Andrew G.B. Bannatyne, and Henry McKenny were prominent. The “Canadian Party” was also represented, including John Schultz, Thomas Spence, and James Stewart. These individuals aligned themselves with key figures from the French-speaking Roman Catholic Métis community, such as Jean-Louis Riel, Guillaume Sayer, Maxime Lepine, and Ambroise Lepine. The English speaking “Half-breed” community also included their voices: William Dreaver, William Gunn, and Donald Gunn. Prominent settlers from overseas also signed: the fathers and sons from the Logan family of Douglas Point<sup>273</sup> and the Bourke family of “Hay Field Family Farm”<sup>274</sup> in St.

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<sup>271</sup> “Petition ... praying for the formation of Cavalry Companies.”

<sup>272</sup> Reported in the “Troops for Pembina,” *Nor’wester* 17 March 1863, 3. Men received \$13 per month, and were paid 40 cents per day for horses.

<sup>273</sup> Father Robert Logan (d. 1866) was born in Jamaica to a Scottish Planter and a Freeborn Black woman. Cynthia Sweet, “Who was the Father of Robert Logan of the Red River Settlement?” *Manitoba History* No. 52 (June 2006).

<sup>274</sup> John Palmer Bourke (1791-1851) was born in Sligo County Ireland, and arrived in Red River Settlement in 1812. See *Dictionary of Manitoba Biography*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999.

James Parish. Important clergy such as the Anglican William Cockran from Northumberland added their support. There are also names associated with the American party, such as trader Norman Kittson; hotel owner George Emmerling; and future American senator Joseph Rollette. Finally, while all the names on the petition are “European” a significant number of the Saulteaux and Cree communities signed the petition, such as the sons of Chief Peguis, August, and Henry Prince, as well as William Bear, and others like Thomas Cameron who are identified as “Indian” in other sources.<sup>275</sup>

The diversity of social identities involved seems bewildering, but it illustrates the broad base of the petition. It cut across community lines (“mini-publics”) to present itself as a universal public. This observation, which relies upon the more easily identified individuals, can be further strengthened with a more quantitative study based upon a geographical analysis of the signators. The petition exists in three copies, each with a separate list of names. Based upon residency data from the 1870 census the first was organized near Fort Garry, the second was west of Fort Garry, while the third was from the east and north of Fort Garry including 15 names from the Indian Settlement at St. Peter.<sup>276</sup> The signatures were collected at four key regions of the settlement, suggesting that there were four different meetings, which would mean a certain degree of sophistication in the communication and management. The organizers of the petition canvassed as large an area as possible, in the effort to gain support for their campaign. The meetings would

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<sup>275</sup> Cameron purchased the windmill in St. Peters in 1852. Kaye, “Flour Milling at Red River.”

<sup>276</sup> I could identify the residency and religious affiliation of roughly one third (110) of the individuals that signed each petition. The first contains 107 names: 38% came from St. Boniface, the two neighbouring parishes of St. James and St. John made up 23% of the petitioners. The second petition contains 33 signatures, 66% came from St. James Parish, which is west of Fort Garry. The third petition contains two pages of signatures totalling up to 157 names. If we split the first page of the petition (61 signatures) from the second (96 signatures) we find the following: in the first sheet 62% were from St. Norbert, St. Boniface, and St. Anne parishes, which are east of Fort Garry; while in the second sheet 82% were from St. Peter, St. Andrew and St. Clement, which are North of Fort Garry. An additional 15 signatures may have come from St. Peters. If we accept that the regular use of proper names as family names was a practice of First Nations peoples.

be held in stores, schoolhouses, on church steps or in other “public” spaces. There were key organizers—hinted at in their role as witnesses for illiterate signators. Fifty-three (or 17.8%) people had their names written for them and then made their mark. In the first set of names, that are accompanied by an ‘X’, the witness is listed as John Christian Schultz. A note accompanies another list of signatures stating that these names were collected by Mr. Bruneau.<sup>277</sup>

Individual motivations are difficult to ascribe accurately. Perhaps some were critical of the government. Others might have expected some form of payment: at least a new gun or a horse, or they may have been interested in defending a land claim. Still others may have felt “duty bound”. Whatever their reasons, this petition, among others, was a form of political participation which was transformational as it re-conceptualized the community.

The Council replied that “the danger to be apprehended from that source was not *now* so imminent as the Petitioners appeared to believe...and that it would be somewhat premature on the part of the Council to take immediate measures for the organization of such local force as that proposed.”<sup>278</sup> Instead, the Council proposed to forward the petition to London to justify the original petition for British troops that the Council had requested.

This outcome, a disappointing one for local rule, is less important than the shift that was happening in the “political imaginary.” A new imagined political community had emerged, where, in the words of Benedict Anderson, “growing numbers of people [began] to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways.”<sup>279</sup> This petition was

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<sup>277</sup> François Bruneau was the “heir” to Cuthbert Grant’s position. He was appointed to the Council on 29 March 1853. He was involved in setting up a distillery and reorganizing the police force. Lionel Dorge, “Bruneau, François-Jacques,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9. Accessed online 3 February 2016.

<sup>278</sup> “Minutes of a Meeting of the Governor and Council of Assiniboia, 11 March 1863,” in E.H. Oliver, *The Canadian Northwest: Its Early Development and Legislative Records*, Ottawa: Government Printing, 1914, pp 515-517.

<sup>279</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (London: Verso, 1991), 36.

making claim about belonging to a body politic that found consensus across linguistic, ethnic, and religious lines. A petition is not simply an action, or an imagination, but a process of claim-making that involves community networks, public meetings, and has recourse to individual political decisions.<sup>280</sup> Petitioning, through its choice of subject and agent, its manner of presentation, construction of authority or formulation of arguments is the result of reflections, discussions, debates, contests or even coercion. As David Zaret put it: “This practical development led to new ideas in politics that attached importance to consent, reason, and representation as criteria of the validity of opinions invoked in public debate.... Thus, novel claims for the authority of opinion sprang from innovations in petitioning practices.”<sup>281</sup> As the *Nor’wester* put it, “The people of Red River are not a disorderly, lawless set—far from it... The moral of all this is that the government should be dissociated from the Company.”<sup>282</sup>

By writing their names on a petition in the name of settlement, these individuals were acting as if they had the right (as citizens) to make decisions despite the lack of an official “citizenship.” In this sense the petition was a claim on citizenship in the same way that Colin Grittner has argued statute labour was a cornerstone of Prince Edward Island’s, very masculinized, political citizenship.<sup>283</sup>

1863 continued to present challenges to the authority of the Council of Assiniboia. Military intervention was an unacceptable response in a context in which the power of “public

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<sup>280</sup> As William Novak explains, membership in the body politic depends on “personal pattern[s] of residence, jurisdiction, office, job, service, organization, association, family, age, gender, race, and capacity.” “The Legal Transformation of Citizenship in Nineteenth-Century America” in *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History*, eds. Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 95.

<sup>281</sup> David Zaret, “Petitions and the ‘Invention’ of Public Opinion in the English Revolution,” *The American Journal of Sociology*, 101, no. 6 (1996): 1499.

<sup>282</sup> “The Present Political Crisis,” *Nor’wester*, 12 May 1863, 1.

<sup>283</sup> “Working at the Crossroads: Statute Labour, Manliness, and the Electoral Franchise on Victorian Prince Edward Island,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 23, no. 1 (2012): 101.

opinion” was expanding. The trial and jailbreaking of a Church of England clergyman Griffith Owen Corbett illustrates the political crisis. On 19 February 1863, Hugh Thomas accused Rev. Griffith Owen Corbett of trying to abort the pregnancy of his daughter, Maria Thomas, who had been hired to clean house for Corbett.<sup>284</sup> Since testifying before the *Select Committee* in 1857, Corbett had become a well-known critic of the Company.<sup>285</sup> Corbett’s allies saw the trial as an attempt by the Company to silence one of its critics. The court case, which lasted nine days, the longest in the settlement’s history, cleaved Red River society in two.<sup>286</sup> The man representing Corbett, James Ross, the editor of the *Nor’wester*, used his paper to make his case to the public.<sup>287</sup> On 19 February 1863, the day on which the trial was to take place the Jury lists were written up. Jean-Louis Riel was the only appointment challenged and he was struck from the list. However, by August of the same year he acted as Juror in the case of Tait vs Bird. In this sensitive issue, the government, still on tenuous footing, was wary of Riel’s independence.<sup>288</sup> By claiming that the jury had been bribed and the court had tampered with evidence Ross attempted to discredit the court once again.<sup>289</sup> Just like the Ballenden issue this Court case turned into a lightning rod attracting critics of the legitimacy of the Council of Assiniboia.

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<sup>284</sup> According to court documents, “Griffith Own Corbett, Minister, of the Parish of Headingly... feloniously and unlawfully did insert one of his fingers into and up her vagina or private parts toward and in the direction of os uteri, or mouth of the womb, against the form of the statute in such case made and provided, and against the peace of the Queen, her Crown and dignity.” “The queen versus Griffith Owen Corbett” in Gibson, *General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia Annotated Records, 1844-1872*, 366–416.

<sup>285</sup> He argued that the Company restricted missionary activity and was holding back development in the country. Gibson, *Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, 159.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>287</sup> Erica Smith, “‘Gentlemen, This Is No Ordinary Trial’; Sexual Narratives in the Trial of Reverend Corbett, Red River, 1863,” in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, ed. Jennifer Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996), 364–403.

<sup>288</sup> Sherriff’s Book 1863-1871, MG2 B4-2, PAM.

<sup>289</sup> Following this trial it was decided that jurors would be paid for their services. This generated more criticism as Ross suggested that the jurors had been “bribed” to pass a verdict of “guilty.” Minutes of the General Quarterly Court (1844-1872) MG2 B4-1 and MG2 B4-2 Sherriff’s Book (1863-1871), PAM.

As a result, despite the guilty verdict, the “justice” of the outcome was far from clear. After the trial, an angry crowd, composed largely of Canadian annexationists, forced open the jail and released Corbett. English and French Métis “loyalists” offered to restore order but the Governor, fearing a “civil war,” talked them down. The optics of unleashing Métis buffalo hunters on “loyal” British subjects daunted the Council. The Toronto *Globe* wrote in February, “the independent class among the Selkirk settlers demand a new system...They are threatened with an attack by the Indians.”<sup>290</sup> It would be easy to frame the Company’s use of Métis force against “loyal British subjects” as a re-enactment of the savage “Seven Oaks Massacre.” Public opinion and the racism it brought with it was complicating legal and political authority. As Leslie Erickson argues in another context, these sensational events “made the paper” and generated a public discourse that reinforced differentiation of gender, class, and race that the social order, in this particularly patriarchal form, relied upon.<sup>291</sup> As in other colonial situations, the rise of settler “public opinion” had contributed to the marginalization of women through an ideology of separate spheres.<sup>292</sup>

Maria Thomas was not simply a victim of an increasingly patriarchal society, but she did become a piece in a much larger contest that was brewing.<sup>293</sup> In April 1863, the magistrates wrote to the Governor Dallas on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1863 stating,

we have seen again...the arm of the civil power paralysed by the absence of any material basis to rest upon ...the riotous and unlawful proceedings [of the jail breakings] have placed us...in a position which constrains us to address you, in the hope that by conferring with the Council or otherwise, you may be enabled to devise some measures for adequately strengthening our hands in the maintenance

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<sup>290</sup> Quoted from “The Northwest,” *Nor’wester*, 9 February 1863, 1.

<sup>291</sup> Lesley Erickson, *Westward Bound Sex, Violence, the Law, and the Making of Settler Society* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 227–28.

<sup>292</sup> Just like the Foss v. Pelly case which also rested on the reputation of a woman, Maria demonstrated her own agency by taking her place on the stand and describing the crimes in detail. Fitzgerald, “Hybrid Identities in Canada’s Red River Colony.”

<sup>293</sup> Smith, “Gentlemen, This Is No Ordinary Trial.”

of authority and order in the Settlement... [There is an] *absence of any military force to control the strife* [italics in original].<sup>294</sup>

For the Métis who had acted as police and provided security, this was particularly troubling and they found themselves caught between a struggle for reform and civil authority.

The same month another party of Dakota arrived in Pembina. Next February the Dakota appeared at the Settlement in even larger numbers and a number of public meetings were called to address the “Sioux problem”.<sup>295</sup> In the absence of official reaction, John Christian Schultz conspired with some other settlers to kidnap Sakpedan (Little Six) and Wakanozhanchan (Medicine Bottle) with the aid of alcohol and chloroform and delivered them to the American Colonel Hatch.<sup>296</sup> Tensions were high the following summer as Ojibwe from Red Lake attacked the Dakota in Minnesota in retaliation for an earlier attack.<sup>297</sup> The council could no longer ignore the issue and so finally, on 23 June 1866 the Council, worried about retaliation for the killings at Red Lake requested Judge Black, (the provisional governor in the absence of Governor Mactavish, and a Native born Halfbreed) to form a militia.<sup>298</sup>

In 1867, William Mactavish would warn the Company about the need to work on building consensus: “unless the Company’s Government is to be entirely supported by force I do

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<sup>294</sup> The council “expressed an unanimous sense of importance of the question to which they referred and of the great desirableness of some practical effect...but the Council not being prepared for the adoption of any definite measure, the whole subject was deferred for further consideration at a later meeting.” “Minutes of a Meeting of the Governor and Council of Assiniboia held on 28<sup>th</sup> Day of April 1863” in Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 522–28.

<sup>295</sup> McCrady, *Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands*, 15–30.

<sup>296</sup> “The Sioux,” *Nor’wester*, 5 February 1864, 2. Carol Chomsky, “The United States – Dakota War Trials: A Study in Military Injustice,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 1 (November 1990): 13–98. Robin Winks, W. *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1960), 174.

<sup>297</sup> For an overview of Dakota relations during this period see McCrady, *Living with Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian-American Borderlands*.

<sup>298</sup> “...resolved that the acting Governor [Black] be empowered to collect from among the Settlers a body of from fifty to one hundred mounted armed men to meet the Sioux on their way to the settlement, and in the event of its being found impossible to persuade them to go back, to escort them into and out of the Settlement, and to take such other measures for the preservation of the public peace and safety, as might be deemed necessary.” Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 566–70.

not think it now can maintain order, and I would therefore strongly urge the absolute necessity in the interest of all parties, that the authorities here should derive their power from some source independent of the Company and that no Company officer should be mixed up with the Government.”<sup>299</sup> However, the Company remained stubbornly opposed to a local militia. When Mactavish returned to the Settlement later that year, and while the number of local constables was increased, the militia was dropped.<sup>300</sup>

Reflection on this petition offers insight into the transformation of political activism in Red River—and Jean-Louis Riel’s place in it. The short term failure, or even the long term achievement of the request of the petitioners is incidental to the impact of the *practice* of petitioning. A new political authority was emerging that would transform the relations between state and society. The more traditional repertoire of *wahakootowin* and *otipemiswak* were being supplemented by a new concept of community security determined by the institutions of the state. By signing, these petitioners were redefining their relationships to each other and the government. The stakes involved went to the heart of the idea of responsible government in British North America. Compare it, for example, to the 1862 Militia Bill crisis. When Macdonald’s conservative ministry fell on the Bill, he turned it into a loyalist stick which he could use to beat his liberal opponents. The British press, upon hearing that the colonists would not foot the bill for their own defence, unaware of Cartier and Macdonald’s politicking reacted poorly, some even suggested selling the colonies to the United States. Unsurprisingly, the

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<sup>299</sup> Dorge, “The Métis and Canadien Councillors of Assiniboia,” Winter 1974, 57.

<sup>300</sup> This was not the end of the matter either, on August 17, 1866, John Demarrais, a Métis living in Red River with family ties to the Dakota attacked and killed in revenge White Nail, a Red Lake Ojibwa, in the HBC store. A witness testified that he called the Ojibwa “Are these the Ochebewuck?,” a reference to the Sioux who had been attacked at Red Lake. Others attempted to defend the prisoner by testifying to his good character and described the Ojibwa as a “bad Indian.” “The Queen versus John Demarrais” in Gibson, *General Quarterly Court of Assiniboia Annotated Records, 1844-1872*, 491–94.



outpouring of vitrol was a considerable blow to loyal British subjects.<sup>301</sup> Similarly in Red River the militia issue would become a testing point for government legitimacy and strengthen the power of public opinion, undermining the HBC claims to best represent British interests.

The organization of petitions, the delayed response, and the totality of the contest were part of an exercise in political will that shaped the authority and legitimacy of political activity. As Maxime Gohier has argued, the practice of petitioning in Indigenous communities in the Lower Saint Lawrence was instrumental to shaping the political relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state.<sup>302</sup> Jean-Louis Riel was a participant, indeed a partial architect, of a new kind of politics in the growing settlement of Red River. Drawing upon the older traditions of organizing and managing a buffalo hunt and kinship relations, while engaging in “rights talk,” petitioning, and public protests, he was reinventing leadership. This leadership could be effective in shaping a hegemony for the centralized state that was to come.

## **1.8 From *Wakhootowin* to Separate Spheres**

While Riel’s father was adapting to the strategies of engaging with the new colonial state, so was his mother. The above discussion of the Riel-Lagimodière family showed that the role of women in establishing kin relationships was critical; they were the “tender ties” that bound Métis society together.<sup>303</sup> While kinship relations at the heart of Métis governance structures were patriarchal, they were also decentralized and therefore facilitated feminine authority.<sup>304</sup> As Nathalie Keramoal

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<sup>301</sup> Robin Winks, *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1998), 115-122.

<sup>302</sup> Gohier, “La Pratique Pétitionnaire des Amérindiens.”

<sup>303</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); Robin Jarvis Brownlie and Valerie Korinek, eds., *Finding a Way to the Heart: Feminist Writings on Aboriginal and Women’s History in Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012).

<sup>304</sup> Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, “Public Mothers: Native American and Metis Women as Creole Mediators in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest,” *Journal of Women’s History* 14, no. 4 (2003): 142–66.

has argued, Métis women were central historical agents in the creation and preservation of the nation and culture.<sup>305</sup> Furthermore, the matrilineal principle undermined the principle of masculine property that sustained the colonial state. Thus, as in other Indigenous societies, female authority provided an important source of Indigenous people's resistance to the colonial hegemony. Critical to frontier diplomacy and patronage, the authority of women proved to be a durable form of accommodating and resisting the revolutionary impact of settler colonialism from the St. Lawrence to the Great Lakes to the West Coast.<sup>306</sup>

To effectively colonize the territory, and invent property, the principal goal of settler colonialism, as a male prerogative, feminine authority had to be undermined. Over the course of the nineteenth century, colonists who aspired to a liberty to dispose of their property without being "dependent" on women, began blocking female control of land. The process of treaty negotiation and the sale of lands, traditionally controlled by women, mark an increasing masculinization of politics. As capital was used to alienate Indigenous peoples from their lands, through ideas of "title" and "sale," Indigenous forms of authority were disrupted.<sup>307</sup> This was also reflected in changing demographics which intensified racialized ideas about "civilization". The arrival, in 1830, of Frances Simpson, the teenage bride of the HBC governor, signalled shifting attitudes about imperialism.<sup>308</sup> Importing White women served as an "alibi of exclusion" that

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<sup>305</sup> "Personne, toutefois ne s'est penché sur l'importance que ces femmes ont eu sur le chef métis...les historiens ne s'intéressent aux femmes que lorsque celles-ci donnent naissance à la nation métisse. Ils accentuent donc leur rôle de procréatrices." Nathalie Kermoal, "Le 'temps de Cayoge': La Vie Quotidienne des Femmes Métisses au Manitoba de 1850 À 1900" (Phd Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1996).

<sup>306</sup> Elizabeth Elbourne, "Family Politics and Anglo-Mohawk Diplomacy: The Brant Family in Imperial Context," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 6, no. 3 (2005); Heidi Bohaker, "'Nindoodemag': The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600-1701," *William and Mary Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (January 2006): 23; Cook, "Onontio Gives Birth."

<sup>307</sup> Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 7-10.

<sup>308</sup> Perry, "'Is Your Garden in England, Sir.'"

allowed settlers to claim autonomy from Indigenous social bonds and to stabilize colonial rule.<sup>309</sup>

Unlike the Lagimodière family, these wives of elite HBC factors were racialized as different and did not integrate into the Métis or halfbreed communities. However, the impact of these few women was marginal and strongly objected to by many already rooted within the Indigenous systems. Even with the massive immigration of white settlers in the post 1870s, Indigenous women continued to find ways to respond actively and creatively to the new conditions. As Sarah Carter and Patricia McCormack point out, recovering the lives of Aboriginal women as “midwives, seamstresses, freighter, nuns or public performers” helps us recover their agency.<sup>310</sup>

The process of marginalizing female authority really began in the labour market. Nathalie Kermoal has shown how the decline of the buffalo hunt and the emergence of a settler colonial order undermined the independence of women and dramatically changed gender relationships in the community.<sup>311</sup> Women had played an important role in the proto-capitalist buffalo robe industry. Gerhard Ens shows that as labour relations shifted, men found other work but women were increasingly marginalized from the political sphere.<sup>312</sup> The work of Nathalie Kermoal and Diane Payment shows that colonialism of Métis societies entailed the replacement of gender egalitarianism with a patriarchal hierarchy.<sup>313</sup> Further damaging was the impact of settler ideas about gendering politics. Throughout the British Empire colonial institutions dispossessed

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<sup>309</sup> Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995).

<sup>310</sup> Sarah Carter and Patricia Alice McCormack, *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands* (Edmonton: Athabaska University Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>311</sup> Kermoal, “Le ‘temps de Cayoge,’” 265. “Nous pouvons conclure en affirmant que la disparition du bison a entraîné une transformation des activités féminines à partir des années 1870. L’expertise des femmes pour la préparation et le tannage des peaux et la confection des produits manufacturés dérivés de la chasse a été peu à peu supplantée par d’autres activités économiques. Il est évident que l’expérience des familles métisses après 1870 n’est pas uniforme et que le travail des femmes dépend essentiellement de leur maris.”

<sup>312</sup> Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 114–21.

<sup>313</sup> Kermoal, “Le ‘temps de Cayoge’”; Diane Payment, “La Vie En Rose: Métis Women at Batoche, 1870-1920,” in *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, Strength*, ed. Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996).

Indigenous peoples by blocking their access to political representation.<sup>314</sup> But in Red River, by involving themselves in the practices of colonial government, along with a new discourse of “public opinion,” Métis inserted themselves into the administration. However, while men like Jean-Louis Riel were increasingly involved in politics like the petitions and public meetings mentioned above, feminine influence was reduced. The ideas of separate “private” and “public” spheres had increasing traction. It was a complex social reality, but the power of the theory of separate spheres as an ideological metaphor ought not to be disregarded.<sup>315</sup> These prescriptive parameters, which attempted to isolate feminine influence from the public sphere carried sufficient weight to disrupt the Indigenous gender relations, with a domino effect on Indigenous governance. As “public opinion” replaced relations of kinship as the organizing principle of society, the autonomy of Indigenous governance based on *wahkootowin* was short-circuited, in a way similar to that described by Susan Sleeper-Smith in the Great Lakes area.<sup>316</sup>

Chapter 3 will discuss the impact of this in greater detail when Riel returns to Red River after his education in Montreal. This transformation would have a devastating long term impact because it undermined kinship authority which was based upon the authority of women. However, I do not wish to fetishize the “traditional lines of descent” and to oversimplify what was a complex transformation.<sup>317</sup> As will be shown, Métis politics continued to rely upon and respect the authority of women, and they continued to control title to their lands. Julie Riel (or

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<sup>314</sup> Julie Evans et al., *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights: Indigenous People in British Settler Colonies, 1830-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

<sup>315</sup> Cecilia Louise Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 10. Janet Vey Guildford and Suzanne Morton, eds., *Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the 19th-Century Maritimes* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994).

<sup>316</sup> Susan Sleeper-Smith, “[A]n Unpleasant Transaction on This Frontier’: Challenging Female Autonomy and Authority at Michilimackinac,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 417–43.

<sup>317</sup> Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 162–64.

sometimes Lagimodière) applied for scrip in her own name and on behalf of her male relatives, and she also continued to manage a family and a mill despite the death of her husband and the absence of her eldest son. While a model of masculine politics was worked out in the new public sphere, the family and social dynamics continued to disrupt colonial hegemony, and this situation led to a remarkable opportunity for reinventing the relationship between the state and society.

## Conclusion

On 21 January 1864, Jean-Louis Riel was dying. The cause of his death is unknown, however there were reports that a particularly dangerous flu had affected many in the settlement in 1864.<sup>318</sup> Sister Sainte-Thérèse attended to Jean-Louis, and received his final blessing to pass on to his eldest son Louis.<sup>319</sup> His words were not recorded, but in the Catholic theology, blessings of a father carry symbolic authority, and both the Sister and father would have recognized the power of this action.<sup>320</sup> From an Indigenous perspective this act represents the power of *wahkootowin*: the invocation of an ancestral relationship in order to immortalize family ties. Either way the blessing, carried by this Catholic nun, reinforced the ties of father to son and filled the latter with a sense of both authority and obligation, critical to Métis hegemony.

Sister Sainte-Thérèse's life in the settlement was also guided by the Riel-Lagimodière sense of *otipemishwak*. In 1859 the Mother Superior of the Grey Nuns in Ottawa ordered Sister

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<sup>318</sup> "Notice," *Nor'wester*, 18 January 1864, 3.

<sup>319</sup> "Lettre à Sara Riel, 26 July 1873," doc. #1-173, in *CWLR* 273. This event will be discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

<sup>320</sup> Consider one example, according to Genesis 49:22-25, Jacob blessed his son Joseph who had been sent away to Egypt in the following manner: "Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring whose branches climb over a wall. With bitterness archers attacked him; they shot at him with hostility. But his bow remained steady, his strong arms stayed limber, because of the hand of the mighty One of Jacob, because of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, because of the Almighty, who blesses you with blessing of the skies above, blessings of the deep springs below, blessings of the breast and womb."

Sainte-Thérèse McDonnell to return to Ottawa. However, the Métis considered her skills as a health-care practitioner and a teacher in Red River essential and they refused to accept the decision. A letter from leading Métis households was forwarded to the Mother Superior asking her to let the sister stay. Rebuffed, they approached Bishop Taché to intervene for them, but again they were disappointed.<sup>321</sup> On the day of her departure, 29 August 1859, a large crowd gathered in St. Boniface to request that she stay. When all of this failed, a posse, led by Jean-Louis Riel, surrounded her cart and, according to the community annals, Sister Sainte-Thérèse was ordered “to get into the cart which was [carrying] Mlle Céleste Lagimodière, who returned to St. Boniface with the prisoner.”<sup>322</sup> Sister Sainte-Thérèse remained in the Northwest until the end of her life.

The lives of Jean-Louis and Julie Riel show us the complex nature of the Métis response to the settler colonial project. Prior to their son’s return, Jean-Louis and Julie adapted to the changing requirements of power in society. They drew upon Indigenous practices of *otipemishwak* and *wahkootowin* to resist the efforts to control their communities. At the same time the leadership of the Riel-Lagimodière family evolved according to the new opportunities for political control presented by a public sphere and an expanding state.<sup>323</sup> One of the most important steps that the family made in order to preserve their power and autonomy was to send their oldest son to school in Montreal. After his death, Jean-Louis’ political activities were taken over by John Bruce who had become a constable for the settlement, but his ability as a politician

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<sup>321</sup> In 1851 Tache had been forceful, and to the point of rudeness, with the Mother Superior in Ottawa in his efforts to attract new novices. Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, 42–44.

<sup>322</sup> Geneviève Rocan, “McDonnell, Teresa” *DCB*. Céleste (age 17) was the daughter of Benjamin Lagimodière and Angélique (née Carrière), ie she was living with the Riel-Lagimodière family.

<sup>323</sup> In his study of Hole-in-the-Day [Bagone-ghiizhig] Anton Treuer discusses a similar transformation of Ojibwe leadership in the mid-nineteenth century. “Bagone-ghiizhig’s contested rise to power defied the accepted Ojibwe definitions of political leadership, which were hereditary and clan based.” Treuer, *The Assassination of Hole in the Day*, 9.

in a changing political environment was limited.<sup>324</sup> When the young Louis returned to Red River he would be the most effective response to the forces of colonisation that the Métis could offer.

William Morton wrote: “at twenty five years of age he[Riel] would make himself, like his father before him, the tribune of his people.”<sup>325</sup> This chapter provides a detailed study of the influence of Riel’s family upon the practices of hegemony in the settlement. The Métis influence was not only based on threats of violence, but also their participation in the mechanics of government and a modern economy. A careful study of practices like petitioning the government and building a home demonstrate the structures of consent building that lay underneath the more dramatic moments of resistance. The example and influence of his parents showed Riel how the Métis needed to participate in the formation of Red River’s public sphere and draw the state down to their level.

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<sup>324</sup> Bruce’s activities policing the settlement have not been recorded by other historians. See “General Quarterly Court,” *Nor’wester* 3 March 1864, 3.

<sup>325</sup> Morton, *Manitoba: The Birth of a Province*, 122.





## Chapter 2

### Riel at School: Sulpician Governance, Sulpician Capital

Jean-Louis and Julie's best choice was to send their son to be educated in Montreal. Louis Riel studied the basics of French and Latin Grammar in the Catholic settlement of St. Boniface on the Red River.<sup>1</sup> His education in Montreal would be far more advanced. He was fourteen when he arrived in Montreal on 15 July 1858 along with Louis Schmidt and Daniel Macdougall. They were chaperoned by the Superior of the Grey Nun's mission in Red River, Marie-Louise Valade.<sup>2</sup> Schmidt and Macdougall were sent to St. Hyacinthe and Quebec respectively.<sup>3</sup> Riel was placed in the care of the Sulpicians who ran the *Collège de Montréal*. He attended the school until March 1864.

The following chapter describes how Riel was selected for this highly prestigious education. It reacts to an older historiography that has downplayed or misunderstood his education. Riel's successes and his participation in student associations illustrate the student experience within a framework of Sulpician interests. The record of Riel's classroom education, religious retreats, and photographs suggests that the Sulpician tradition of "récit de soi," or self-telling—as a technique of self-governance—developed his dialectical thinking and informed his critique of "civilization." As a speech presented at a graduation ceremony in 1864 illustrates,

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<sup>1</sup> His teacher was an Oblate, Jean-Marie Lefloch, from France. From 1857 to 1868 Lefloch worked as a missionary in Pointe des Chênes and then moved to Saint Joseph in North Dakota.

<sup>2</sup> In 1843 Marie-Louise Valade left Montreal to establish a mission in the colony of Red River at the invitation of Bishop Taché. In 1858 she was returning to Montreal to request permission from the Mother Superior to open an orphanage in Red River. See "Lettre de MGR Taché Aux soeurs de Bytown," *Riviere Rouge* 12 Jan 1858, Ta4706-4707, Société Historique de Saint Boniface [SHSB]. See also Raymond Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface the "Good Fight" and the Illusive Vision* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003), 58.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Schmidt, "Les Memoires de Louis Schmidt," *Le Patriot*, 13 July 1911, No. 19, 13-15. See also Raymond Huel, "Living in the Shadow of Greatness: Louis Schmidt, Riel's Secretary," *Natives Studies Review* 1 (1984):16-27.

Riel drew on the techniques encouraged by this “*récit de soi*” and his Indigenous background to challenge the paradigm of “civilization.” The chapter concludes with a discussion of Riel’s premature departure from the college and the implications of his education for the historiography of colonial domination.

## 2.1 Historiography and Sources

Previous studies of Riel’s life in Montreal have been framed by a narrative in which a modern cosmopolitan environment overwhelmed an impressionable and innocent boy from the frontier. By contrast his education was seen as antiquated and isolating. Writing in the 1950s, for instance, George Stanley and Joseph Kinsey Howard resorted to monastic images of the college: “a forbidding structure enclosed within a high stone wall” where students had no contact with the outside world.<sup>4</sup> They summarized his education as a failure because of his choice not to become a priest or because of his lack of deference for authority. Biographers have made much of Riel’s “failure” to complete his studies. Stanley and J.M. Bumsted attribute it to the death of his father: “unsettled...he left the college.”<sup>5</sup> Thomas Flanagan argues that Riel was blinded by a love affair and that he was frantic and hasty.<sup>6</sup> Riel’s classmate, Joseph-Octave Mousseau, left a memoir of his time at college, along with a character sketch of Riel that has guided this scholarly interpretation. Written in 1886, this perspective is tinted by the execution of Riel and the issue of his insanity.<sup>7</sup> There are other reasons to challenge Mousseau’s account. He only attended the

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<sup>4</sup> George F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1963), 24-26. Kinsey Howard was more sympathetic in his portrait of Riel, but faced with a lack of archival material he turned to romance and his version of Riel was a suffering spirit, morose and despondent. *Strange Empire: A Narrative of the Northwest* (Toronto: Swan Publishing, 1956). Maggie Siggins’s description of the college parallels Stanley’s “A grim four story, T-shaped stone building...enclosed by forbidding high walls.” *Riel: A Life of Revolution* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1994), 49.

<sup>5</sup> J. M. Bumsted, *Louis Riel v. Canada: The Making of a Rebel* (Winnipeg: Great Plains, 2001), 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Louis “David” Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 20.

<sup>7</sup> J. O. Mousseau, *Une Page d’histoire* (Montreal: W.F. Daniel, 1886).

College for two years, from 1861-63. Further, he was in the lower classes while Riel was in the upper classes. Mousseau's memoirs should be considered more as a "moral" tale, rather than historical observation.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, other biographers have used this account without considering the potential problems of a retrospective view. Rather than examining the curriculum or the college context, biographers used tropes, thus failing to grasp the complexity of the education Riel received. Even sympathetic biographers like Bumsted and Jennifer Reid downplay his experience at the college.<sup>9</sup> My research has uncovered new documents which allow us to describe Riel's life in greater depth and with more accuracy.

Even with these findings Riel's education must be reconstructed from tantalizing fragments. During my research for this chapter, I started with scraps of paper that had seemingly little correspondence to Riel's life—following their trails has provided some fruit and many dead-ends. The wide variety of sources offers some compensation for the limited perspective. Riel's own writing, and that of family, friends, and teachers provide personal details. The perspectives of other classmates or acquaintances offer useful opportunities for comparison. The administrative and pedagogical material at the Sulpician archives in Montreal provides the bulk of the information in this chapter. Literature and newspapers help to fill out the cultural and social context.

## **2.2 A Sulpician College: Balancing Discipline and Reflection**

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<sup>8</sup> The following passage clarifies Mousseau's intentions: "ses mœurs ont toujours été irréprochables et sa foi était toute de sincérité et de conviction. Obéissant en tout et partout, très studieux, faisant toujours son devoir quel qu'il fût, ne murmurant jamais et quoique d'un tempérament vif et bouillant, on le voyait rarement s'emporter: ce n'était qu'à la vue de persécutations ou d'injustice commises entre condisciples qu'il intervenait quelquefois et jamais en faveur du plus fort." *Ibid.* 8.

<sup>9</sup> Bumsted, *Louis Riel v. Canada*; Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012).

Initially situated on St. Paul street near the Old Market and the Port, the *Collège de Montréal* moved to Sherbrooke street in 1861—in the middle of Riel’s education—to escape the “contagion” of the city. The Sulpicians were the original seigneurs of the Island of Montreal. Born in the post-Tridentine era of Catholic reform, the Congregation of St. Sulpice was an organization of secular priests dedicated to restoring the dignity of the clergy while building a church in the new world.<sup>10</sup> Their struggle against popular ignorance led the Sulpicians to couple teaching with community management. In so doing they combined the tasks of a parish care with clerical training. The Sulpicians early interiorised the idea that, as the unique heirs of the “original” French civilization, they were responsible for continuing the French tradition in the colony.<sup>11</sup> From 1767-1837, their political conservatism aligned with British interests in the “Revolutionary Era”<sup>12</sup> and, by advocating loyalty and paternalism in Montreal, the Seminary was able to strengthen its ties to the British state. It was therefore a key institution in creating and maintaining what Jerry Bannister has called the “Loyalist order,” which, as will be shown in Chapter 3, informed so much of Riel’s politics.<sup>13</sup> A boost to the Sulpician and British dedication to maintaining the status quo was the arrival of twelve additional Sulpicians fleeing the French Revolution in Paris. (Prior to this the authorities had put a moratorium on French clerical immigration.) As refugees in British North America they fostered a “counter-revolutionary

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<sup>10</sup> Dominique Deslandres, John Alexander Dickinson, and Ollivier Hubert, *Les Sulpiciens de Montréal: une histoire de pouvoir et de discrétion, 1657-2007* (Montréal: Fides, 2007). This paragraph is based upon the essays in book collection. See also Brian Young, *In Its Corporate Capacity: The Seminary of Montreal as a Business Institution, 1816-1876* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> See the essays by John Dickinson “Les Sulpiciens au Canada,” (33-83) and Dominique Deslandres, “Histoire et Mémoire de Soi,” (85-115) in the above collected edition.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Ducharme, *Le Concept de Liberté au Canada à l’époque des révolutions Atlantiques, 1776-1838* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 17–20.

<sup>13</sup> Jerry Bannister, “The Loyalist Order Framework in Canadian History, 1750-1840,” in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Michel Ducharme and Jean-François Constant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 98–146; Nancy Christie, “‘He Is the Master of His House’: Families and Political Authority in Counterrevolutionary Montreal,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (April 2013): 341–70.

Atlantic.” In return for supporting the British regime during the rebellions of 1837-8 in Lower Canada, the Sulpician Seminary was legally recognized as a corporation which allowed them to recoup considerable property.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1840s the Catholic Bishop Ignace Bourget entrusted the Sulpicians with the task of training Montreal’s clerical class which made the Sulpician Seminary the primary administrator of symbolic capital in the city.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Sulpician Seminary and the college, at the nexus between authority and morality, were central nodes in the relationship between state and society. Former students from both ends of the political spectrum, like the conservative George-Étienne Cartier and the liberal Joseph Doutre, connected the Seminary to the demands of an increasingly “responsible” colony.<sup>16</sup>

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Sulpician Seminary, now closely allied to the interests of the state, saw the college as the primary means for creating a governing class. Considered a high school for youth, usually enrolling in their first classes between the ages 7-12, students from a wide variety of ages could be found in one class. Generally, class sizes diminished gradually towards the upper levels as students found their financial resources limited or found employment. The college on St. Paul Street, founded in 1806, was colloquially named “le petit séminaire,” and the Sulpicians officially used it as preparatory institution for boys destined for the priesthood.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, by deploying its cultural capital in political and social spheres, as one of a growing number of “collèges classiques,” it was recognized as the

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<sup>14</sup> “With new corporate status the seminary could begin exacting its seigneurial rights with the full force of the law.” Young, *In Its Corporate Capacity*, 59–62.

<sup>15</sup> John Alexander Dickinson, “Les Sulpiciens au Canada,” in *Les Sulpiciens de Montréal: une histoire de pouvoir et de discrétion, 1657-2007*, ed. Dominique Deslandres and Ollivier Hubert (Montréal: Fides, 2007), 58–60.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 58; Young, *In Its Corporate Capacity*, passim. Yvan Lamonde, *Gens de Parole: conférences publiques, essais et débats à l’Institut Canadien de Montréal, 1845-1871* (Montréal: Boréal, 1990), 68–69.

<sup>17</sup> For an overview of the history see Ollivier Hubert, “Petites Écoles et Collèges Sulpiciens,” in *Les Sulpiciens de Montréal: une histoire de pouvoir et de discrétion, 1657-2007*, ed. Dominique Deslandres and John Alexander Dickinson (Montréal: Fides, 2007), 411–44.

training ground for the future political elite of Canada. According to Ollivier Hubert, by the second half of the century “la marque ‘collège classique’ identifiait les écoles jouissant d’un crédit incontestable.”<sup>18</sup> The reasons for this were directly tied to social status, “L’invention des ‘collèges classiques’ dans la second moitié du XIXe siècle fut l’un des principaux outils dont se dotèrent les familles dominantes pour garantir au mieux leur reproduction face à la montée des class moyennes.”<sup>19</sup> The idea of clerical domination has been part of that invention. By way of contrast, Ollivier Hubert convincingly argues that the college was a result of a constant negotiation between social agents and structures<sup>20</sup> and claims that ideas of clerical domination are overstated.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the college was increasingly capable of technologies of governance and forming political subjectivities. Notes from inspection reports in 1850 and 1857 describe the challenge of educating children for society while protecting them against its potentially corrupting influences, internal as well as external.<sup>21</sup> For instance, the report of inspectors Faillon and Gutter notes,

Les M[es]M[essieurs] ont exprimé le désir de voir les lits séparés par des cloisons, ou du moins que tous les élèves eussent des caleçons. Pour éviter les sorties durant la nuit, et surtout pour empêcher, autant qu’il se peut, que plusieurs ne se trouvent ensemble aux latrines, chaque élève aura un vase de nuit, la porte

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<sup>18</sup> Ollivier Hubert, “Collèges classiques et bourgeoisies franco-catholiques (XVIIe-XXe siècles),” in *Le Collège Classique pour garçons: Études historiques sur une institution Québécoise disparue*, ed. Louise Bienvenue and Christine Hudon (Montreal: Fides, 2014), 127.

<sup>19</sup> Hubert, “Collèges Classiques et Bourgeoisies Franco-Catholiques (XVIIe-XXe Siècles),” 135. For a discussion of the invention of tradition and state authority see Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 10.

<sup>20</sup> The colleges were characterized by “une plasticité qui répondant aux demandes de scolarisation changeantes et multiples issues du milieu, nous éloigne de l’image de raideur traditionaliste projetée et par les laudateurs et par les éreinteurs du système.” Hubert, “Le Collège de Montréal et Ses Clientèles Au XIX Siècle: Multiplicité Des Attentes et Pluralité de L’offre,” 57.

<sup>21</sup> Ollivier Hubert, “Le Collège Québécois: Réflexions sur la Porosité d’un espace Traditionnel,” in *Temps, Espace et Modernités: Mélanges offerts à Serge Courville et Normand Séguin*, ed. Brigitte Caulier and Yvan Rousseau (Québec: Presses de l’Université Laval, 2009), 83–92.

des latrines sera fermée et s'ouvrira par un cordon renfermé dans la chambre du surveillant.<sup>22</sup>

The body governing the operation of the college, the Directors' Council, paid careful attention to the inadequacies of the building and the threats of contact with the immorality of the city.<sup>23</sup> An inspection report indicates that students were visiting the city, for a multitude of reasons, far too frequently. Regulations were created to control such activity.<sup>24</sup> The weekly marches and the porter were frequent objects of the administration's criticism. In 1850 the inspectors wrote, "Les permissions de sortir ont été trop fréquentes jusqu'ici, et ont causé nécessairement du désordre et de la dissipation dans la maison."<sup>25</sup> Within the walls the *Reglements* and *Coutumiers* provided the techniques for what Hubert calls "l'ambition délirante de fixer en tout, pour tous et en tout temps."<sup>26</sup> According to these directives, all physical and intellectual activity, all speech, reading, and thinking were subject to supervision, particularly in spaces that were prone to transgressions, such as corridors, lavatories, dormitories, and the music hall.

The techniques of governance and discipline evolved. Ollivier Hubert writes, "C'est seulement dans la seconde moitié du siècle que la figure du pensionnaire trouve une incarnation et que l'internat classique délaisse l'horizon utopique pour devenir une hétérotopie fonctionnelle, capable de structurer profondément l'intériorité des collégiens."<sup>27</sup> A good illustration of these

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<sup>22</sup> "Procès verbal de la Visite du Collège de Montreal faite par Mr. Granet Supérieur du seminaire. Commencé le 22 Janvier 1857," Comptes rendus des conseils 1850-1864 and 1864-1888, I2: 1.3-4, APSSM. Numerous examples can be found in the "Comptes rendus des Conseils," I2:1.3-4 & I2:1.3-5, APSSM; and two inspection reports, one noted above and "Procès verbal de la visite du Collège de Montréal fait par MMr(s). Faillon & Gutter [1850]," P1:11.3-109, APSSM.

<sup>23</sup> 5 August 1859 "Comptes rendus des conseils," I2:1.3-4 & I2:1.3-5, APSSM.

<sup>24</sup> "Procès verbal de la visite du Collège de Montréal fait par MMr(s). Faillon & Gutter [1850]," P1:11.3-109, APSSM.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Hubert, "Le Collège de Montréal et ses clientèles au XIX siècle: Multiplicité des attentes et pluralité de l'offre," 151. The official schedule is outlined in the *Coutumier du Petit Séminaire 1802-1829* (used up to 1860) and the *Règlement du Petit Séminaire de Montréal*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

goals was moving the college in 1862 to a new campus on the side of the mountain, its present site on Sherbrooke street. Surrounded by fields and orchards, separated from the city, it was a clear contrast with increasing urban “contagion” of the Recollet suburbs.<sup>28</sup> The wall that isolated the college from Sherbrooke street served as a good metaphor of the Catholic and anti-modern image that the Sulpicians sought to uphold. This metaphor corresponded to middle- and upper-class discourse about security, health, and development that David Hanna has explored in the history of the Terrace Developments, and Brian Young has described for the establishment of the Mont Royal Cemetery.<sup>29</sup>

There was also increasing pressure from students and society to serve other interests, and, in many respects, these reforms were part of reciprocal processes. Discipline does not mean totalitarianism. While ideally, the walls secured the space as a site of disciplinary power, in fact these were porous boundaries.<sup>30</sup> The frequent admonishments and censuring of boys for smoking, smuggling candies, reading illicit literature, or generally behaving badly is evidence of an active student sub-culture.<sup>31</sup> Visits from parents, classes for “externs” (who did not sleep at the college), and unruly student activity also disrupted clerical domination. According to a memoir written in 1907 by Zepherin Delinelle (who attended the school from 1845-1853), subversive students, mocking their professors, were known to have circulated Lafontaine’s poem “L’enfant et le

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<sup>28</sup> This was part of a well established tradition. In 1839 the St. Paul street college had been described in a similar manner: “The grounds attached to the college are ample, both for gardens and places of exercise; and the whole is surrounded by a high wall, except the immediate front of the building, which is separated by palisades on a parapet from the college street.” *Description du Collège de Montréal 1839*, P1.11.3-102, APSSM.

<sup>29</sup> D. Hanna, “Creation of an early Victorian suburb in Montreal,” *Revue d’Histoire Urbaine* 9 (1980), 47. Brian Young, *Respectable Burial: Montreal’s Mont Royal Cemetery* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> “Le dispositif disciplinaire collégial est ouvert, mais poursuit sans relâche un idéal de fermeture. La discipline apparaît alors comme l’effort pour contenir l’astuce qui cherche à ruser avec elle.” Hubert, “De la diversité des parcours ...,” 42-43. As Hubert points out this was never entirely successful, in 1874 Hyacinthe-François-Désiré Rouxel recalled that “le Collège n’a point pris l’esprit et la physionomie d’un petit séminaire autant qu’il aurait été à désirer.” Quoted in Ollivier Hubert, “Petites Écoles et Collèges Sulpiciens,” 427.

<sup>31</sup> *Comptes rendus des conseils 1850-1864 and 1864-1888*, I2:1.3-4 and I2:1.3-5, APSSM. Sheldon Rothblatt, “The Student Sub-Culture and the Examination System in Early 19th Century Oxbridge,” in *The University and Society*, edited by L. Stone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 274.



Maître” in the halls.<sup>32</sup> Some disruptions were more serious. In 1830, “subversives” in the form of law students, snuck into the college and had a “party from hell”.<sup>33</sup> Delinelle also wrote of another riot in 1848 when students barricaded the dormitories and threw potatoes at their professors.<sup>34</sup> Transgressions were tolerated to some degree, and Hubert speaks of a “zone de tolerance” in the activities of the college students.<sup>35</sup> As Louise Bienvenue and Christine Hudon argue, transgression of discipline was also part of becoming a man.<sup>36</sup>

More importantly, as Hubert argues, the Directors themselves did not desire a passive disciplined corps, but rather active cultural agents. They recognized that many students, and their parents, had secular aspirations and did not wish to pursue a clerical career.<sup>37</sup> Humanist training was not primarily about repression and discipline but the capacity to profoundly structure student reflexivity.<sup>38</sup> The goal was not to block agency but to discipline for “self-mastery.” This training in restraint was part of a cultural capital that authorized the future directors of society and made students into the elite constituents of the political order.

### 2.2.1 Curriculum

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<sup>32</sup> Zepherin Delinelle, “Mémoires de M. Zéphirini Delinelle Ptre, élève du Collège de Montréal de 1845 à 1853 écrit en 1907, à la demande de M. René Labelle, P.S.S. Directeur Du Collège,” P1:11.3-220, APSSM, 9.

<sup>33</sup> “Another Revolution,” *The Montreal Gazette*, 11 November 1830; Hubert, “Petites Écoles et Collèges Sulpiciens,” 423.

<sup>34</sup> Zepherin Delinelle, “Mémoires de M. Zéphirini Delinelle Ptre, élève du collège de Montréal de 1845 à 1853 écrit en 1907,” P1:11.3-220, APSSM.

<sup>35</sup> Ollivier Hubert, “Le Pensionnat comme Utopie et Hétérotopie, XVIIe-XIXe Siècles,” in *Le Collège Classique Pour Garçons: Études historiques sur une institution québécoise disparue*, ed. Louise Bienvenue and Christine Hudon (Montreal: Fides, 2014), 175.

<sup>36</sup> Louise Bienvenue and Christine Hudon, “‘Pour Devenir Homme, Tu Transgresseras...’ quelques enjeux de la socialisation masculine dans les collèges classiques Québécois (1880-1939),” *The Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 3 (2005): 485–511.

<sup>37</sup> Hubert, “De La Diversité des Parcours et des Formations dans les Collèges du Bas Canada: le Cas de Montréal,” *Historical Studies in Education* 21, no. 1 (2009): 41-65.

<sup>38</sup> A debate on curriculum also reflects this. While some professors, like Pierre Rousseau, were more in favour of a humanities education, others, like Prof. Delavigne, preferred a curriculum that emphasised religious principles and that would produce future seminarians. Hubert, “De la Diversité des Parcours ...,” 60. See also Hubert, “Le Collège Québécois,” 87.

Over the course of six years, the Sulpicians taught their students according to the *ratio studiorum*. It was essentially a literary education, based upon post-Tridentine Jesuit pedagogy: an initial emphasis on Latin, French and Greek grammar gradually gave way to more philosophical and rhetorical studies.<sup>39</sup> Students also had classes in history, math and, later, physics and chemistry. The first three years were called *Éléments*, *Syntax* and *Méthode*. This was followed by studies in the humanities: *Versification*, *Belles Lettres* and *Rhétorique*. This could be followed by two years of *Philosophie* which were preparatory for studies at the Grand Seminary.

Despite the long history of the *ratio studiorum*, this humanities curriculum was a dialogue between ancient precepts and modern teaching. The Sulpicians wanted students to narrate themselves into “Christian civilization.” Originally developed by the Jesuits in the sixteenth century, the curriculum was reformed in the eighteenth-century to link the virtues of moral subjects (morality, humility, honesty, integrity) to political constitutions. “Christian civilization” was taught through *exempla*, or good models, of virtue, beauty, leadership, and dispositions.<sup>40</sup> According to Sulpician curriculum, Félicité Robert de Lamennais had diagnosed the malady of the age—religious indifference, and Louis Gabriel de Bonald had prescribed the cure—a moral society would emerge from the reform of its rulers.<sup>41</sup> Both Lamennais and Bonald were philosophers of the French Restoration Era. While Lamennais’s later writings would be condemned by the pope’s *Singulari Nos* in 1834, his early work was praised by Rome for its critique of liberal society. As François Beaudin argues, Bishop Lartigue, the first bishop of

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<sup>39</sup> Claude Galarneau, *Les collèges classiques au Canada français [1620-1970]* (Montréal: Fides, 1978).

<sup>40</sup> Galarneau argues that *l’émulation* “...entretenir chez lui une tension perpétuelle, il n’y avait rien de mieux pour l’inciter au travail et pour contrôler l’acquisition des connaissances.” Galarneau, *Collèges Classiques*, 193.

<sup>41</sup> Sections of Lamennais’ *Essai sur l’indifférence* are found throughout the Sulpician readers. Despite the controversial nature of his work it seems that the Sulpicians were willing, with carefully editing, to use his powerful rhetoric. Bonald’s teachings on social order and divine law were repeated constantly “Themes – Morceaux Choisis de divers auteurs propres à servir de thèmes aux rhétoriciens,” *Themes en Rhétorique*, I2:6.2.2.1-141, APSSM.

Montreal, initially received Lamennais' work enthusiastically.<sup>42</sup> This position was reversed following papal condemnation. It is therefore interesting to see that Lamennais's works continued to be used in the college curriculum, and undoubtedly reflects their "gallican" reputation. Bonald was an important theorist of theological monarchy. Following Charles Rollin and Hugh Blair, both pedagogical reformers, the Sulpician curriculum prescribed the use of ancient Spartan virtues in lessons. These ancient models were somewhat unorthodox because they urged the reform of social relations rather than the reform of the individual's relationship with God, but they fit well into the Sulpician project of social reform.<sup>43</sup> Cicero's speeches, for instance *Pro Milone*, were frequently held up as examples worthy of imitation. Additionally modern works like Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, a satire on social climbing and the pretensions of middle class, were used to encourage a social perspective.

The first three years emphasized grammar and syntax.<sup>44</sup> While there were some written assignments, the bulk of the work was oral recitation. The students were expected to memorize and repeat rules.<sup>45</sup> As Patrick Joyce writes, "The logic of classics teaches regularity and lucid expression and embeds a capacity for understanding in terms of general laws."<sup>46</sup> In other words memorization was critical to develop clarity of categories that were essential to governance. At the same time, the Sulpicians were sensitive to child psychology and encouraged their professors

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<sup>42</sup> "L'influence de la Mennais sur Mgr Lartigue, premier évêque de Montréal," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, 25, no. 2 (September 1971): 225-237.

<sup>43</sup> This marked an important shift in the history of governance, where "the creation of a literary and cultural environment in which comparison of ancient and modern values, the weighing of the meanings of virtue, and contemplation of the connections between morals, on the one hand, and the structure of political constitutions, on the other hand, had become ongoing concerns." See Jay Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 49.

<sup>44</sup> *Grammaire Latine suivie de la Versification, à l'usage du Petit Séminaire de Montréal*, Montreal: Imprimeries de Lovell et Gibson, Rue St. Nicolas, 1847.

<sup>45</sup> The manner of teaching espoused by the Sulpicians is described in a contemporary instruction manual. See Direction Elements [Latins] College de Montreal, P2:6.2.2.1-2, and Remarques sur les Éléments et la Syntaxe du Latin [entre 1851 et 1861], I2:6.2.2.1-8, APSSM.

<sup>46</sup> Patrick Joyce, *The State of Freedom A Social History of the British State since 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 254.

to cultivate understanding. Reading the instructor's manual for the class of *Éléments* is enlightening:

On comprend sans peine combien ces notions sont sèches et arides pour des enfants. Il ne faut donc pas s'en tenir à ce court exposé, ils n'y comprendraient rien. Il faut encore multiplier les *exemples*, les faire *raisonner*, *comparer*, les époques, mais tout cela dans leur langage. Montrez leur qu'ils emploient tous les jours, tous ces différent temps, sans s'en douter. On ne leur demande qu'un peu d'attention, de réflexion sur ce qui est d'un *usage journalier*. De cette façon tout s'explique pour eux, toute difficulté s'évanouit et en leur faisant pour ainsi dire toucher du doigt à qui est si fréquent [?] ils s[er]ont forcés d'en convenir : *c'est vrai, M. nous n'y avions pas pensé*.<sup>47</sup>

They also encouraged competition rather than simple obedience: "On fait une question à un enfant, s'il répond *Bien* on passe à un autre, mais vivement... Ces petits combats excitent singulièrement leur emulation. Ils se préparent pour s'embarrasser mutuellement."<sup>48</sup> The Latin rules were not just about submission, but about self-mastery.

Even in the case of administering physical punishment, professors were advised not to "force" the punishment. If the student refused to submit to punishment, they were to warn them three times. If the student still refused to submit, they were to continue teaching and approach the Director of the college immediately after class. Competition, method, and modelling civil behaviour encouraged the intellectual and physical habits necessary for the practice of authority. Charles Rollin's pedagogy was their reference for moulding student character: "On doit s'appliquer encore plus à former le cœur de ses Élèves qu'à orner leur Esprit. Il faut donc tâcher de réformer Fortement mais suavement les Défauts de Caractère d'Honnêteté et pour cela lire attentivement et même faire un extrait de ce que dit M. Rollin."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Direction Elements [Latins] College de Montreal*, P2:6.2.2.1-2, APSSM.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

For the Sulpicians, younger students had a great capacity for memory, but lacked reason: “On ne doit jamais oublier qu’à cet âge les enfants sont capables de retenir une multitude de faits. Leur Mémoire est très active et très puissant. Au contraire chez eux, le Raisonnement est moins suivi. Viendra un temps où il faudra les exercer à Argumenter.”<sup>50</sup> That time came in *Versification*, and *Belles Lettres* when studies shifted from repetitive grammar exercises to the humanities. A contemporary instruction booklet provides the following definition, “La versification est l’art de faire des vers. Les vers sont des paroles mesurés et cadencés selon certain règles. Pour faire des vers latins, il faut savoir les règles de la prosodie latine et celles de la construction du vers.”<sup>51</sup> Having mastered the Latin rules, students were now expected to advance and apply their sense of form and presentation through poetry and literature.

In *Belles Lettres* students were encouraged to consider their audience and context rather than stick to rigid genres. The curriculum was influenced by the eighteenth-century theorist Charles Rollin. His *Traité des études* (1727) opposed the rigidity of the classical era, promoted a theory of eloquence based upon a study of nature, and emphasized understanding.<sup>52</sup> According to the *Cours Abrégé de Belles Lettres*, the textbook, “Les beaux Arts sont une imitation de la belle nature représenté à l’esprit dans l’enthousiasme. Nous disons 1[iere] que les arts sont *une imitation de la nature*.”<sup>53</sup> Opposed to cold materialism and rationalism the Sulpicians taught students that an artist must also be in touch with human sentiment, “Entrainé par une émotion si puissante, l’Artiste en ce moment oublie son état; il sort, pour ainsi dire, de lui-même...c’est un Dieu qui l’inspire.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Grammaire Latine*, I2:6.2.2.1-51, APSSM, 101.

<sup>52</sup> Barbara Warnick, “Charles Rollin’s *Traité* and the Rhetorical Theories of Smith, Campbell, and Blair,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 3, no. 1 (February 1985): 64.

<sup>53</sup> *Cours abrégé de Belles Lettres à l’usage du Collège de Montréal* (Montreal: C.P. Leprohon, 1840).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

*Rhétorique* was the final year of the *cours classique*. As the textbook notes, “C’est elle [rhétorique], en effet, qui fait réussir les plus grandes affaires, et vient à bout des entreprises les plus difficiles.”<sup>55</sup> Learning public speech, particularly the arts of eloquence and persuasion, was considered one of the most valuable and important skills for these young men who would become people of “persuasion.” Professors were encouraged to set up a mock parliament in their classes and debates were sometimes staged.

Lessons included the emulation of the “greats” of the western “canon.” The curriculum included classics like Cicero and Demosthenes, but also some moderns like Bossuet, Bodin, Massillon, le Maistre, even Lamennais.<sup>56</sup> Following the precepts of eloquence students were expected to analyse these debates, breaking them down according to types of logic, forms of persuasion, and seven divisions of the speech: *la disposition*; *l’exorde*; *la proposition*; *la confirmation*; *la péroration*; *la narration*; *la refutation*. Rhetoric was more than a good speech, it was a science and art, the most powerful weapon in the arsenal of classical curriculum.

The Sulpician curriculum started with basic memory skills, and students advanced to learn “forms” and aesthetics, and finally were taught reason and logic. The programme required discipline, taught hierarchical structures, and respect for traditional authority; however, it was also a framework for developing the skills of reflection that underwrote a series of humanist, social and cultural relations. By the end of their study, students were aware of an ongoing debate between the importance of keeping tradition and adapting to deal with the challenges of modern society. Sulpician theorists, Felix Dupanloup and Alphonse Magnien sought to reconcile the traditions of the church with the needs of modern society through a moderate and liberal

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<sup>55</sup> *Cours abrégé de Rhétorique à l’usage du Collège de Montréal* (Montreal: Lecler et Jones, 1835), 7.

<sup>56</sup> A series of cahiers titled *Thèmes en Rhétorique* serve as an indication of what the Sulpicians taught, see I2:6.2.2.1-138; - 139; -140; - 141 and - 142, APSSM. These were compiled by the philosophy professor Houdet in 1824, but may have been used later.

treatment of papal doctrine.<sup>57</sup> These debates also made them aware of the necessity of finding a balance between social conformity and individual responsibility. As a graduate, Riel was expected to carry the torch of classical learning, but was also aware of the need to adapt it to modern circumstances.

### 2.3 Riel: “Un jeune homme venant de si loin...”

Archbishop A.-A. Taché provided funds for Riel’s education from his own parish, but also secured financial support from the Masson family and Charles-Octave Lenoir the Director of the *Collège de Montréal*.<sup>58</sup> For the year 1861-62, the costs of Riel’s education at the Seminary are listed in pounds, shillings and pence: £42/11/1. They are broken down into room and board (£21/10/0), clothing (£16/11/1), 12 months’ laundry (£3/0/0), and books and supplies (£1/10/0). This kind of support was exceptional and suggests that his status as an “Indian” was recognized by the directors of the college.<sup>59</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, the Sulpicians in Montreal were no longer directly engaged in evangelizing but training clergy to do it for them.<sup>60</sup> Thus, there was considerable pressure on Riel to become a priest.

A native of St. Hyacinthe, Taché also hoped that the education of these boys would help fulfill a broader missionary project: to increase the capacity of the Catholic Church in the

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<sup>57</sup> Christopher Kaufmann, *Tradition and Transformation in Catholic Culture: The Priests of Saint Sulpice in the United States from 1791 to the present* (New York: MacMillan, 1988), xv.

<sup>58</sup> The only archival record that survives regarding the seminary’s support for Riel’s studies is an administrative note from 1861-1862 “Liste des élèves du Collège de Montréal bénéficiaires de bourse d’étude données par le séminaire de Saint-Sulpice en 1861-1862,” P1:11.3-120, APSSM.

<sup>59</sup> These details are recorded only for Riel and of Joseph Onaskeur (a Mohawk from Two Mountains). The Mohawks of Two Mountains were an exceptional instance of Sulpicianary evangelism because they were the original inhabitants of the Sulpician seigneurie.

<sup>60</sup> A Sulpician Superior wrote in 1903 that “Il est vrai que Saint-Sulpice conformément à sa vocation incontestable et unique doit en général le refermer dans la direction des grands séminaires.” Quoted in John Alexander Dickinson, “Évangéliser et former des prêtres: les missions sulpiciennes,” in *Les Sulpiciens de Montréal: une histoire de pouvoir et de discrétion, 1657-2007*, ed. Dominique Deslandres, John Alexander Dickinson, and Ollivier Hubert (Montréal: Fides, 2007), 384.

Northwest. His hope was that these Métis, a hybrid (as he saw them) of Indigenous and newcomer cultures and heritage, would return to the Northwest as missionaries. The Catholic Church, watching the arrival of American and Canadian settlers and migrants, along with talk of “development,” felt an urgency to expand its evangelizing capacity. Raymond Huel calls it Taché’s “good fight.”<sup>61</sup>

Riel’s parents, Julie and Jean-Louis, had their own motivations. Any anxiety that they felt in sending their son thousands of kilometres away was mitigated by the presence of Riel’s aunt Lucy, who lived in Montreal’s Mile End with her husband, John Lee. No correspondence between the Lee and Riel families during this period has survived, but a letter in 1888 from Lucy Lee to Julie Lagimodière indicates that they stayed in touch.<sup>62</sup> Also, their son had a local sponsor in the Masson family, whom Jean-Louis met in 1858 when he travelled to Montreal to purchase his mill. Letters sent by Louis to Sophie Masson in 1858, 1861, 1862, and 1864 demonstrate an increasingly intimate relationship.<sup>63</sup> For his parents, Montreal was a well chosen future for their son.

Riel was already fourteen years old when he left his family home, but it seems he embraced the college life with enthusiasm. He wrote home, “Pour votre enfant Louis rien ne lui manque ici. Tous nos chers bienfaiteurs m’ont témoigné beaucoup d’intérêt et de sympathie.”<sup>64</sup> Certainly there were moments of homesickness, but as he wrote to his sponsor, Mme Masson, he was also full of gratitude,

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<sup>61</sup> Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, passim.

<sup>62</sup> “Lucy Lee to Madame veuve Riel, 30 July 1888,” Riel Family Correspondence MG 3 D2 #36 PAM.

<sup>63</sup> “Louis Riel a Sophie Masson,” Major Henri Masson Collection, 0592 1813 01a-01c SSHB; the others are in *CWLR*. See also Thomas Flanagan and Glen Campbell, “Newly Discovered Writings of Louis Riel,” in *Metis in Canada: History, Identity, Law and Politics*, ed. Christopher Adams, Greg Dahl, and Ian Peach (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2013), 249–76. Louis Schmidt also recalled visiting the Masson’s chateau with Riel, “Memoires” *Le Patriote de L'Ouest*, 20 July 1912, no. 20, 4.

<sup>64</sup> “Louis Riel to très chère maman, cher petits frères, chères petites soeurs, 21 March 1864,” doc. #1-004 in Riel, *CWLR*, 6–8.



Vénérée bienfaitrice, seul et éloigné de tout ce qu'il y a de cher au coeur d'un fils, vous qui avez l'âme si bonne et si tendre, il n'est pas besoin de vous dire ce que j'éprouve lorsqu'à la venue du jour de l'an, je pense au toit paternel... Mais je n'en dois pas faire que pour eux... Ne m'est[!] peu glorieux de trouver mes plus puissants protecteurs, moi que vous aviez résolu de protéger avant même de me connaître, dans votre château que j'ai pu par votre bonté, trouver accessible aussi bien que les pauvres chaumières de la rivière rouge... "Il y a peut-être longtemps," me disiez-vous un jour que j'étais sur le point de prendre congé de vous, "que vous n'avez pas reçu d'avis de vos bons parents;" "j'espère" ajoutiez-vous ensuite avec le ton d'une mère, "que vous ne trouverez pas mauvais que je vous en donne comme si j'étais votre mère." Ah! Madame, que cette tendresse m'avait consolé.<sup>65</sup>

By all accounts Riel was a serious youth, perhaps even excessively so. If anything this gained him the trust of his fellows. One of the other Métis sent to Lower Canada, Louis Schmidt, was a lifelong friend of Riel and they frequently met during summer vacations. He left behind a memoir which sheds light on a Métis student's experience.<sup>66</sup> He and Riel spent time with the Grey Nuns in Chateauguay. He writes, "Il ne faut pas croire que je m'ennuyais dans la compagnie de ces bons anachorètes. Ils savaient me rendre le temps agréable de toutes façons: promenades dans les environs, excursions de pêche dans les îles, et autres distractions, tout cela tuait la monotonie quand elle voulait venir."<sup>67</sup> He recalled how the two young men climbed the Stations of the Cross to look down the river bend (perhaps with a sense of homesickness). "Nous nous réunions tous les jours sur un beau coteau vert où s'élevait un calvaire, et on ne pouvait cesser d'admirer la vue magnifique qui se trouvait devant nous du côté de l'Ouest."<sup>68</sup>

Riel was the only student from the Northwest at the college, and he stood out. His friend and classmate Eustache Prud'homme praised his achievements in 1870: "Un jeune homme

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<sup>65</sup> I have added quotation marks to clarify this letter. "Louis Riel to Sophie Masson, 29 December 1862," doc. #1-002 in *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>66</sup> The memoirs were reprinted in *Le patriote de L'Ouest* from 14 March 1911 – 8 June 1912. See also Huel, "Living in the Shadow of Greatness: Louis Schmidt, Riel's Secretary."

<sup>67</sup> Louis Schmidt, "Memoires: Chapitre II (1854-1858)" *Le patriote de L'Ouest*, 27 July 1911, 4. From the text it is unclear who Schmidt is referring to. "Anachorètes" would suggest the Nuns, however his use of the masculine pronoun suggests he was referring to his friends visiting him, Louis Riel and Daniel McDougall.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

venant de si loin... il y avait là plus qu'il n'en faut pour piquer la curiosité de ses compagnons... Durant tout le cours de ses études, il sut se concilier l'estime et l'amitié de ses compagnons; et c'était certainement l'un des plus faciles et des meilleurs talents qu'il y eût dans sa classe."<sup>69</sup> It seems Riel played up his unique heritage as Prud'homme recalled him telling his fellows stories in the courtyard about pemmican and scalping. He was clearly playing into stereotypes about the "wild west" with these tales, but "playing Indian" did not make him an outsider.<sup>70</sup> From my study of the *Registre des élèves et leurs coordonnées 1851-1885*, between 1858-64, 82.9% of the students were from Canada East (45% of whom were from Montreal).<sup>71</sup> The other 17% of students were from Canada West, Ireland, Massachusetts, New York, Vermont, the Maritimes and other American states. These numbers reflect roughly the same distribution found by Hubert for earlier years.<sup>72</sup> Even the students from within Montreal came from diverse backgrounds. Student distribution roughly matches that of the city's population; and students did not necessarily come from more wealthy households.<sup>73</sup> The only discernible pattern is that fewer students came from Protestant dominated districts.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> "Louis Riel," *L'Opinion Publique*, 19 February 1870, 6-7. Prud'homme's contemporary perspective, while clearly biased in Riel's favour, offers a useful rebuttal to the perspective of Mousseau mentioned in the introduction.

<sup>70</sup> Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>71</sup> These numbers are calculated from "Registre des élèves et leurs coordonnées 1851-1885," I2:6.1.3-1 APSSM.

<sup>72</sup> Hubert, "De La Diversité Des Parcours ..."

<sup>73</sup> By contrast, a study of the students at the British and Canadian school by Poutanen and MacLeod shows a greater degree of concentration and lower dispersion of students. "'Proper objects of this institution': Working Families, children, and the British & Canadian School in nineteenth-century Montreal," *Historical Studies in Education* 20 no. 2 (2008): 22-54. Hubert argues that over the course of the nineteenth century there was increasing discrimination in terms of family wealth as the college is increasingly associated with a elite education. Hubert, "De La Diversité Des Parcours ..."

<sup>74</sup> These maps were created by relating student addresses with street vertices, and then mapped by Sherry Olson. Sherbrooke and St. Laurent Street are clear, as are Victoria Bridge, the Port and the Lachine Canal. The source of the data are addresses from the *Registre des élèves et leurs coordonnées 1851-1885*, I2:6.1.3-1, APSSM. Some of the gaps were filled in by consulting Lovell's Montreal Directory at the BANQ.

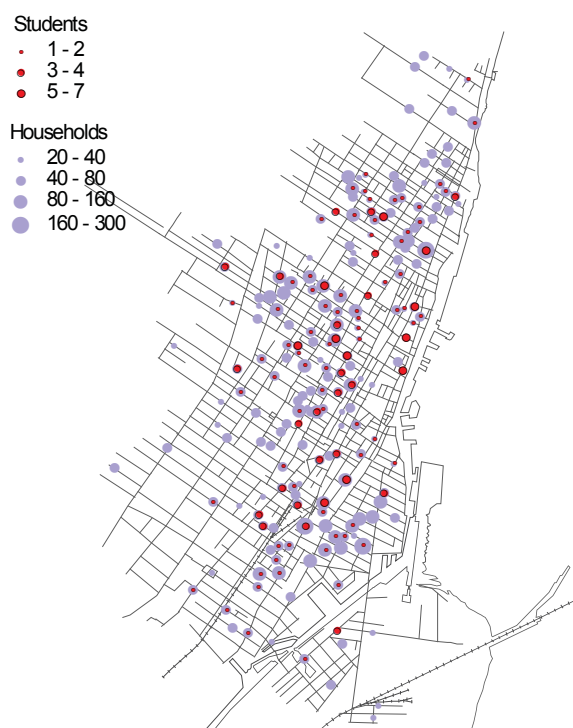


Figure 1, Student Distribution and Average Household size

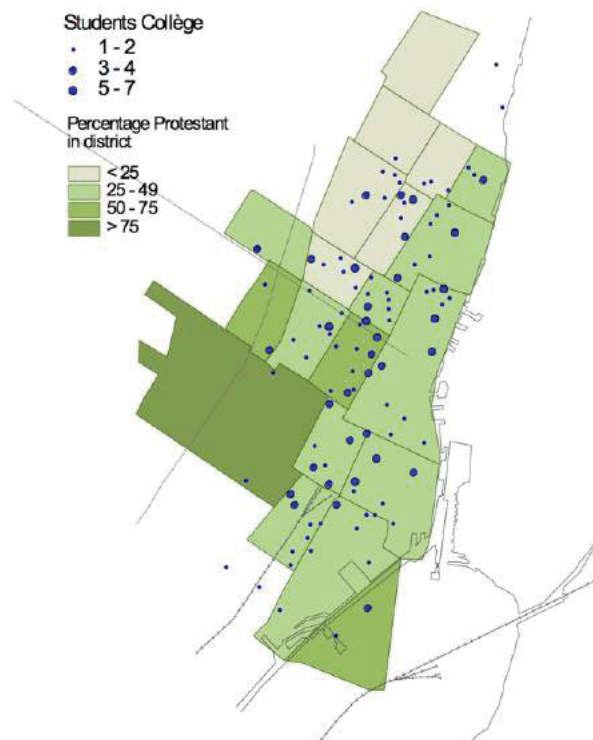


Figure 2, Student Distribution and Percentage of Protestant Population

Riel's grades are recorded in the *Notes des examens trimestriels 2ieme Cahier*.<sup>75</sup> Neither a failure nor brilliant, Riel was successful. A consistent comparative study of the grades is difficult to carry out, but it seems that he was above the class average. Every term students were given a grade based upon their "conduct," their "application" and their "achievement".<sup>76</sup> The scale was generally from 1-10, with 1 being the best score.

**Riel's Semester Grades at le *Petit Seminaire*, posted in his bulletin (grades for "conduct"/"application"/"achievement")**

<sup>75</sup> See "Notes des examens trimestriels de 1850-1 à 1865-66," 2e Cahier, I2.6.3.1-5, APSSM. The records show that every semester an exam assessed each student's recitation and explication skills. There are also grades for the English and Math exams.

<sup>76</sup> I have converted the grades to numeric values based upon a note found in the margin of one of the Instructor's direction book in order to make a comparison. See "Elements 1851-53" I2:6.3.1-6, APSSM.: 1- Parfait Bien; 2 – Très Bien; 3 – Très Bien(reduced); 4 – Bien; 5 – Non Bien.; 6 – Bien (reduced); 7 – Assez Bien; 8 – Medium; 9 – Moyen; 10 Très Mal.

	1 <sup>st</sup> Bulletin	2 <sup>nd</sup> Bulletin
(Red River) <i>Elements</i>	n/a	n/a
1858-59 <i>Syntax</i>	7/7/1	
1859-60 <i>Methode</i>	3/3/4	3/3/2
1860-61 <i>Versification</i>	3/2/3	1/3/3
1861-62 <i>Belles Lettres</i>	1/2/2	2/2/2
1862-63 <i>Rhétorique</i>	2/2/2	2/2/3
1863-64 <i>Philosophie</i>	3/3/3	2/2/3
1864-65 <i>Philosophie</i>	2/3/3	...blank

Riel had three exams per year, each consisted of a grade in “recitation” and in “explication”.<sup>77</sup>

While he struggled in the first term of *Méthode*, his grades improved quickly and by the following year he was regularly top in the class of *Versification* taught by Father J. Palatin. This improvement did not last throughout his studies, as his grades declined somewhat in the later years.

Another useful source is the *Notes Hebdomadaire 1857-75*, which was used to record weekly grades. While confirming Riel’s aptitude, they show his increasing absence from classes in 1862.<sup>78</sup> A change is particularly noticeable in Philosophy in 1864-5. While he continued to receive good grades, they were merely average compared to the rest of the class. He was ranked in the middle of a class of 13.

<sup>77</sup> “L’un au commencement du mois de Décembre. Le second à la fin du mois de Mars. Le troisième à la fin de l’année.” “Examens,” *Direction Elements [Latins] College de Montréal*, P2:6.2.2.1-2, APSSM.

<sup>78</sup> See the various cahiers in the collection “Résultats scolaires” (Nos. 5-20), I2: 6.3.1, APSSM.

Previous biographers argue that his marks were affected negatively by mental instability or emotional trauma caused by the news that his father had died (late 1863).<sup>79</sup> Indeed, Riel's letter home on 21 March 1864 expresses his despair: "Ah! que le coeur me fait mal! Plus de père; non c'est fini. Sur la terre, plus de père! Papa, cher papa, vous aurez soin de nous encore du haut du ciel...Ah! Quel coup! Quand j'y pense, je me trouve comme dans un rêve!"<sup>80</sup> However, careful study challenges the argument that this affected his academic performance. His second "Bulletin" for *Philosophie* in 1864 shows no noticeable deviation. In fact, the weekly grades from 1862 show that he started to lose his focus well before the death of his father, whereas the semester grades in later years remained good. Rather, it seems the news became a lesson in self-mastery: "Après la nouvelle qui m'est venue plonger dans la plus profonde douleur, comme vous pouvez l'imaginer, on m'a conseillé de ne pas écrire de suite; afin d'être plus maître de moi et de ne pas tant vous attrister."<sup>81</sup> The academic weakness in 1862 was likely due to the disruption of classes during the move of the campus from downtown to the mountain.

Beyond the administrative registers there are no references to Riel's class activities in his first two years. The earliest reference is a loose scrap of paper inside the cover of an untitled cahier that has the following note "*Cantiques – Esprit St. Descendez en nous 238 – Zion de la mélodie 274.*"<sup>82</sup> On the other side is written the date 27 April 1862 and the following list of student names: "Heroux, Alp.; Riel; Houle; Troie; Hurtubise; Racicot; Quolier; Leber; Major; Terrault." This tells us that Riel completed his examination in two religious Cantiques. A

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<sup>79</sup> See Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 10. Gilles Martel, *Le Messianisme de Louis Riel*, 56.

<sup>80</sup> Riel, "Lettre à Très chère maman, chers petits frères, chères petites soeurs," doc. #1-104 in *CWLR*, 3–5. The other basis for this assessment derived from his uncle John Lee who recalled in 1885 that Riel was greatly upset by the death of his father. As Flanagan admits, this text, written in the post-rebellion and post-asylum context, needs to be carefully evaluated. Thomas Flanagan, *Louis "David" Riel Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 12–15.

<sup>81</sup> Riel, "Lettre à Très chère maman, chers petits frères, chères petites soeurs."

<sup>82</sup> *Comptes rendus des diligences et notes du Catechisme de St. Jean Baptiste 1855-1877*, I2:6.3.3.1-9, APSSM. This cahier is preserved in the archives of the Sulpician seminary in a folder titled "Cours d'instructions religieuses."

memorized sequence of questions and answers was used to teach students the dogmas of the church.<sup>83</sup> Riel's name is recorded in the classes of "Catechisme de St. J. Baptiste" in 1861 and every subsequent year until 1864.<sup>84</sup>

These examinations were quasi-public and were an opportunity for the college to engage with the city beyond the secure walls. They demonstrated to all participants that the college was in dialogue with modern society. There were occasionally important visitors, such as Bishop Bourget who attended the college's celebration of the purification of the Holy Virgin on 8 February 1857.<sup>85</sup> Competition was encouraged so that students would desire public engagement. As recorded in the meeting notes for the catechism classes: "il parait que la classe de Versification n'a pas besoin d'indulgence, elle ne veut que le combat, où sans doute elle espère, si non encore le victoire au moins d'honorables succès. Eh bien, ouvrons donc le lieu à ces jeunes athlètes et que les plus anciens sachent qu'ils ont à bien tenir devant une armée brillante de jeunesse et de vigueur."<sup>86</sup>

It was in *Versification* that Riel started to stand out. Professor Parent directed the class in 1860-1, and he regularly ranked Louis Riel's work as top in the class. Riel, independent-minded and somewhat of a Romantic, stood out now that he was composing rather than repeating lessons. He read La Fontaine, Moliere, Racine, and Chateaubriand, and was drawn to the spirit of

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<sup>83</sup> In Riel's time they used *Catéchisme de la foi et des moeurs Chrétiennes; par M. de Lantages*, (Paris: Sagnier et Bray, 1853).

<sup>84</sup> In 1858-60 Riel would have been in the Catechism class of Saint Louis de Gonzague, but I have found no records of his enrolment. In fact, the archive contains little trace of the instruction for the younger classes, all that has survived are "Catechisme Saint Louis de Gonzague cours d'instruction religieux 1858-[1860]," I2:6.3.3.1-12, APSSM. No records of these classes have survived from 1864 to 1865. "Comptes rendus des diligences et notes du catechisme de St. Jean Baptiste 1855-1877," I2:6.3.3.1-9, APSSM. For a description of the Catechism classes, see the the record of 1872-3 in the "Compte rendu des conseils 1864-1888," I2:1.3-5, APSSM.

<sup>85</sup> "Comptes rendus des séances solennelles du catechisme de St. Jean Baptiste 1857-59," I2:6.3.3.1-10 APSSM.

<sup>86</sup> "Année 1856-57, liere instruction," Comptes-rendus des diligences de catechisme St. Jean-Baptiste et St. Patrick I2:6.3.3.1-8, APSSM.

romanticism current in Lower Canada.<sup>87</sup> For the romantics, Christianity was about the expression of genius rather than its doctrine. As the French poet Chateaubriand wrote in *Le Génie du Christianisme*, Christianity refined tastes, developed virtuous passions, gave vigour to thought, and provided noble styles for the writer.<sup>88</sup> Through these readings Riel developed the ability to “judge” culture. As Pierre Bourdieu points out, “taste” is a means for shaping social hierarchy.<sup>89</sup> *Versification* was an introduction into the sophistication of the well-bred elite and an important source of cultural capital.

In mid-nineteenth-century Montreal, poets like Octave Crémazie and authors like François-Xavier Garneau exemplified the romantic spirit of the era. Glen Campbell agrees that many of Riel’s poems “portant l’empreinte des Romantiques français, étalent une aptitude très prometteuse.”<sup>90</sup> Romanticism was a mode of expression particularly suited to nineteenth-century nationalists, and the resilience of a nation in the face of oppression is a theme seen in Riel’s early poetry. One poem, “Le Chat et les Souris” is a fable that imitates the work of La Fontaine. The mice, “groupe souriquois” (a term used to describe the Mi’kmaq or Maliseet peoples),<sup>91</sup> resist the Cat, which is “anglaise par la naissance,” “austère” and “flegmatique.” He writes, “Eh! toute une nation/ Qu’un barbare tyran dans son âme hautaine/ Condamne de la sorte à la destruction!” Despite a massive sacrifice of lives, the mice seek revenge and the cat flees to die alone. The

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<sup>87</sup> Eustache Prud’homme provides the most convincing description of his romanticism. He wrote: “Tout le monde sait que Riel possède de belles facultés oratoires... Mais ce que le public ignore, c’est qu’il est un excellent poète. Il m’appartient plus qu’à tout autre peut-être de le dire, à moi qui ai été son compagnon de classe, et qui ai lutté avec lui d’estoc et de taille dans l’arène poétique.” *L’Opinion Publique*, 19 February 1870, 6-7.

<sup>88</sup> François-René Chateaubriand, *Le Génie du Christianisme* (Paris: Migneret, 1802), 10.

<sup>89</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (New York: Routledge, 1984).

<sup>90</sup> “Stratégies de résistance dans la poésie de Louis Riel,” *Francophonies d’Amérique*, no. 13 (2002): 188.

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, the letter of Father Pierre Biard of 31 January 1612 in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791* ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland: Borrows Brothers). Accessed online: <http://moses.creighton.edu/kripke/jesuitrelations/>, on 6 August 2017. It is used in an unambiguously positive sense in this context. This is not surprising given it was originally used by LaFontaine in *Le Combat des Rats et de Belletes*, obviously in a “Noble Savage” paradigm. Riel’s adoption of this French term seems ironic, but fitting.

moral is simple: “Le bon droit est ainsi toujours vengé.” According to Campbell, the quest for justice is prevalent in all of Riel’s poetry: “Le poète jouera le rôle d’un dieu vengeur, punissant les coupables et réparant dans la mesure du possible les injustices. La vengeance deviendra une constant, voire un thème obsessionnel, de sa poésie protestaire.”<sup>92</sup> While in the college context it would be read as part of a French-Canadian nationalist vision, later Riel used his poetry as a literary weapon in the crusade for Métis rights.

These themes of aesthetic revival were continued in *Belles Lettres*. Riel’s professor was Léon-Alfred Sentenne, an established public intellectual who had lectured on the moral and intellectual destiny of French Canadians at the Cabinet de Lecture in June 1860.<sup>93</sup> On that occasion Sentenne provided a reading of Deuteronomy 32:7, “Remember the ways of old, consider the years of many generations.” He encouraged his listeners to study the history of their fathers to know their destiny. Each member of society, he argued had a “mission spéciale,” as did each nation. The conclusion of his speech was reported in *L’Echo*, “A nous maintenant, de le perpétuer; à nous, de poursuivre une carrière si noblement commencée; à nous, de remplir la sublime mission qui, dès l’origine, leur a été confiée; celle de faire briller sur ce Continent tout la bonté; toute la grandeur, toute la sainteté du catholicisme.” This link between Catholicism and French nationalism made by Riel’s teachers would later be employed by Riel, but adapted to the Métis nation.

At the college, the most important genre of poetry was the moral fable which was intended to be natural and simple.<sup>94</sup> Students were encouraged to imitate Lafontaine (who is now,

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<sup>92</sup> Campbell, “Stratégies de résistance dans la poésie de Louis Riel,” 189.

<sup>93</sup> *Echo*, 5 July 1860, 195.

<sup>94</sup> “Le style de la fable doit être simple, naturel, naïf, familier, riant et gracieux.” *Cours Abrégé de Belles Lettres*.



paradoxically, considered a master of irony and ambiguity)<sup>95</sup> as an honest and straightforward writer whose morals were clear.<sup>96</sup> As Glen Campbell and Thomas Flanagan have pointed out, Riel's own fables drew clear distinctions between right and wrong and accentuated the inevitability of divine justice.<sup>97</sup> The lack of ambiguity in Riel's fables was typical of the Sulpician teaching.<sup>98</sup> Riel's own theory of the fable stressed candor, simplicity, and sincerity. He writes, "Lafontaine ne peut plaire/S'il n'est simple, bon, sincère."<sup>99</sup> Riel's early poems are imitations of models from Lafontaine and Phedre: for example "L'Epagneul et son maître," "Le Sexagénaire," and "La Fourmi et sa mère."<sup>100</sup> In the latter poem, the young ant (*fourmi*) repudiates her mother, and is justly punished:

Méconnaître sa mère! Et la mettre au chemin!  
L'injurier!.... eh bien! Le ciel vengea ce crime.  
La coupable fourmi d'abord, par un voisin  
Fut réduit à manquer de tout. Pas même un grain  
Ne resta dans son magasin.  
Elle tomba dans un abyme  
De malheurs:  
Aux voleurs  
Succéda la paralysie  
Triste et pesante maladie  
Qui la mit enfin  
A mourir de faim.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> See Anne L. Birberick, *Reading Undercover: Audience and Authority in Jean de la Fontaine*, (London: Bucknell University, 1998). Lafontaine's audience was various and complex, so "he adopts a rhetorical strategy based on concealment and disclosure." This allowed him to be anti-canonical even as he aspired to establish himself within the system of literary patronage.

<sup>96</sup> I2:6.2.2.1-129. "Lafontaine naquit à chateau Thierry petit ville de champagne. Jamais homme ne fut plus simple, mais de cette simplicité ingénie qui est le partage de l'enfance."

<sup>97</sup> Glen Campbell, *Selected Poetry of Louis Riel: Poésies de Jeunesse*, translated by Paul Savoi (Toronto: Exile Publications, 1993), 12.

<sup>98</sup> Riel copied his teachers well, but that did not define his writing, and in this respect I cannot agree with Flanagan that Riel "did not have [Lafontaine's] capacity for irony or for sadness," or that "such subtlety was foreign to Riel." Flanagan, *Louis "David" Riel Prophet of the New World*, 10-11.

<sup>99</sup> "Fables," doc. #4-013, in *CWLR*, 25.

<sup>100</sup> Fables choisies récitées à l'Exercice public de la fin, I2:6.2.2.3-14, APSSM.

<sup>101</sup> "La Fourmi et sa mère" doc. #4-005, in *CWLR*, 7-8.

While written in a Sulpician college, these poems came from a perspective that was inspired by a Métis worldview. The centrality of family relations is a common thread that runs through Riel's fables and respect for one's parents, particularly mothers, is a repeated moral.<sup>102</sup> The Sulpician teachings around the cult of Mary, a prominent tradition at the college,<sup>103</sup> was a good fit for someone like Riel and would become a central part of his own philosophy.

Seeking the traces of a messianic psychology in gestation, as Thomas Flanagan and Gilles Martel have done, makes too much of Riel's poems "Incendium" and "Les hommes après le deluge."<sup>104</sup> These apocalyptic scenes were frequent themes for student compositions at the college. In the year 1861, "Les Hommes Après le Deluge" was the theme for a Latin verse composition by members of the Académie Française. Raymond Giroux, a student in *Belles Lettres* and later a missionary in the Red River, was accorded the privilege of copying his winning poem of this title into the *Cahier d'Honneur* and he received first prize for Latin Verse at the award ceremony.<sup>105</sup> In March, 1859 the journal *Echo du Cabinet de Lecture Paroissial* published *L'Incendie de Montréal en 1852*, a poem by the college director M. Denis.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, other themes like the "Great Fire of London," and the "Burning of Rome" by Nero were popular subjects. Riel's classmates also wrote about earthquakes and the terrible evidence of God's power in the world.<sup>107</sup> Apocalyptic visions were part of the culture of writing and important exercises for students, and do not therefore describe Riel's unique personal religiosity nor his unsettled mind.

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<sup>102</sup> In "Le Rat et sa Mère" a boisterous young rat accidentally hits his mother. See doc. 028 in *Ibid.*, 4:50–51.

<sup>103</sup> Julie Boutin, "Le Culte Marial chez les Sulpiciens," MA Thesis, Université de Montreal 2005.

<sup>104</sup> Flanagan, *Louis "David" Riel Prophet of the New World*, 8–9.

<sup>105</sup> See Devoirs pour les compositions de prix, I2:6.3.2, APSSM. Giroux' poem is recorded in "Cahier d'honneur de travaux des élèves en Rhétorique 1851-1866," I2:6.3.3-21, APSSM. For the award ceremony see "Distribution de Prix," *Le Journal de l'Instruction Publique*, Vol. V, No. 8-9 (August-September 1861), p. 161.

<sup>106</sup> *L'Echo du Cabinet de Lecture Paroissial*, Vol. 1 No 5 (1 March 1859), pp 72-73. This poem too was a clear exposition of Divine punishment, a flaying of the city, described in graphic detail.

<sup>107</sup> "Tremblement de Terre a Catan" and "Les Enfers" I2:6.3.3-26, APSSM.

Yet, no mere imitator, Riel also participated in the student sub-culture through his poetry. A classmate, Eustache Prud'homme, published the following poem by Riel in a Montreal newspaper in 1870:

Ma dissipation vous a rendu sévère,  
C'est juste, à mon travail vous ne croyez pas bien.  
Certes un doux avis peut résoudre l'affaire  
Mais non, tout par rigueur. Ah vraiment quel moyen!<sup>108</sup>

Riel uses the name of the professor, "Moyen," to create a pun with the French word for "rule."

In *Rhétorique* and in *Philosophie* Riel was taught to reflect upon the nature of culture, society, and civilization. Religion was of course the bulwark of civilization, and at the college Riel was introduced to theories of society that defended social order, as defined and created by the church, against liberalism. Such teaching was no longer about rote learning, but about critical reflection, and students were encouraged to develop arguments and judge virtues and vices. Years later, in 1869, Riel in his Bill of rights would cite one of the readings by Jean-Baptiste Duvoisin.<sup>109</sup> Riel either read Duvoisin's *La Défense de l'Ordre Social* or was taught the principles of his work in the class of *Rhétorique*.<sup>110</sup> The *Défense* was an examination of the speculative character of the French Revolution and a critique of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. Duvoisin defended "society" and "civilization" as the ultimate goal of humankind.<sup>111</sup> He argued that it was easy to predict that the *philosophes* of the French Revolution would become intolerant, and that society needed to be defended.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> "Louis Riel," *L'Opinion Publique*, 19 February 1870, 6-7.

<sup>109</sup> "Déclaration des habitants de la terre de Rupert et du Nord-Ouest," doc. #1-021, in *CWLR*, 35-38. See also Thomas Flanagan, "Political Theory of the Red River Resistance," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 11, no. 1 (March 1978): 153-64.

<sup>110</sup> A copy of Duvoisin's other book *Démonstration Évangélique* (1802) does survive in the Seminary archive, it contains an *ex libris* from the "petit séminaire." See I2:6.2.2.2-3, APSSM.

<sup>111</sup> Jean-Baptiste Duvoisin, *An Examination of the principles of the French Revolution*. London, 1796.

<sup>112</sup> Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 103.

### 2.3.1 Palmares

The *Palmares*, or student awards presented at the end of year ceremonies, were another means of recognizing, as well as encouraging, student work. In 1860, Riel received his first award in poetry.<sup>113</sup> In 1861, he was awarded prizes in English verse and Latin verse.<sup>114</sup> While he received no awards in 1862, the following year, in *Rhétorique*, he won awards in English and Latin verse as well as Latin discourse.<sup>115</sup> In an act that hints at his enthusiasm for antique European culture, he latinised his name “Ludovicus Riel”.

The recognition at the awards ceremony was a public event and one of the rare moments when the reciprocal relationship between the city and the college was exposed. Here the Sulpicians could showcase, for students and the public, their efforts to create a governing class. The ceremony illustrates well the ongoing dialogue within the institution between the interests of modern society and the precepts of classical learning. The college invited prominent politicians as guest speakers. A particularly good example of this was the visit of George-Étienne Cartier at an award ceremony on 10 July 1860.<sup>116</sup> Cartier represented what all the students, including Riel, could become, a distinguished defender of the French race, offering services to his country.<sup>117</sup> Details of this visit were recorded in the *Journal de l'Instruction Publique*. The students sang a

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<sup>113</sup> “Palmare 1860,” *Palmare: exemplaires supplémentaires 1842-65*, I2:7.1-1, APSSM.

<sup>114</sup> The *palmare* for this year are missing in the archives of the seminary, but another list can be found in the *Journal de l'Instruction Publique*, 5, no. 9 (1861): 161.

<sup>115</sup> “7 Juillet 1863” *Palmare*, I2:7.1-1, APSSM.

<sup>116</sup> “Examens publics et distributions de prix,” *Journal de l'Instruction Publique*, 4 no. 7 (7 July 1860): 119-120.

<sup>117</sup> This period of Cartier's life was perhaps his most active. Most notably he was lobbying for the unification of the provinces of Canada in a federation, involved in the codification of Quebec's Civil Code, and in the summer of 1860 he also played host to the Prince of Wales during his official visit to North America. Young sees Cartier as embracing the “spirit of enterprise” and turning his back upon the ideals of the 1837-8 rebellions. Brian J. Young, *George-Étienne Cartier: Montreal Bourgeois* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981), 53-86.

song (“O Canada! Mon pays! Mes amours”) written by Cartier.<sup>118</sup> Then Cartier, donning his student cap in a sign of solidarity, addressed the student body, recalling his fondness for the school and honouring the important work that the Sulpicians were doing.

C’est la première fois que j’ai le plaisir de me trouver dans cette enceinte depuis mon cours d’études. Alors, comme tous mes condisciples, j’étais plein d’espérances. Je ne puis m’empêcher d’exprimer toute l’émotion que je ressens en revoyant ces lieux où l’on m’a enseigné les premières notions de la morale et de la religion. ... Pour vous, jeunes élèves, l’espoir de la patrie, n’oubliez pas qu’il pèse sur vous une grande responsabilité. Dépositaires des sciences que l’on vous enseigne, vous devrez plus tard les faire valoir au profit de la patrie, lorsque chacun d’entre vous se trouvera placé dans la sphère que la Divine Providence nous a départie; c’est alors surtout que vous devrez mettre en pratique les enseignements religieux que vous avez reçus dans cette institution bénie, vous rappelant que c’est par la vertu et la religion que nous conserverons toujours notre nationalité canadienne-française.

He concluded with the remarkable promise to his listeners, “Quelqu’un d’entre vous, jeunes élèves, est probablement appelé à occuper dans ce pays la position que je remplis actuellement; il le fera beaucoup mieux....Je souhaite à celui-là d’avoir toujours présent à la pensée ...la conservation de notre race.”<sup>119</sup>

This speech and Cartier’s visit had an influential effect on Riel who developed a great admiration for Cartier.<sup>120</sup> In 1866, he wrote letters and poems to Cartier asking for his support.<sup>121</sup> In one poem titled “Toi qui conduis l’état, Illustre et fier Cartier!” Riel asked him to support his work,

Cartier! Prête l’oreille aux chaleureux accents  
Que ma lyre ravie  
En ses commencements  
Consacre à ton génie.

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<sup>118</sup> A copy of the Cartier Centenary pamphlet in the McCord Museum archives contains this song. P197/D3, George-Étienne Cartier Papers, McCord Museum.

<sup>119</sup> “Examens publics et distributions de prix,” *Journal de l’Instruction Publique*, vol. IV no. 7 (7 July 1860): 120.

<sup>120</sup> Alistair Sweeney suggests that Riel worshiped Cartier as a boyhood-hero. *George-Étienne Cartier: a biography* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).

<sup>121</sup> See Riel “Toi qui conduis l’état, Illustre et fier Cartier!...”; “Ma voit reviendra-t-elle à titre d’importune...”; “Au milieu de la foule...”; docs. #4-033, #4-034, and #4-036 in *CWLR*, 67–78.

But Riel must have been somewhat embarrassed and self-aware, and endeavoured to verbalize the anxiety he felt about being too forward. As he also wrote,

Tes gloires me semblent bien pures  
Pour sentir jamais ces injures  
Jusqu'à tout réfuter je ne m'avance pas.  
La muse, auprès de toi, me défend ces débats.  
"Ne l'importune point, sois sage,[""] me dit-elle.  
[""]En ce lieu, garde-toi d'engager la querelle  
C'est bien assez déjà qu'il veuille t'écouter.  
Profite du moment..."<sup>122</sup>

It is unclear what "quarrel" Riel was referring to, but it may have been the debates around Confederation. There is no record to show whether Cartier ever responded,<sup>123</sup> but Riel was exercising an authority and self-critique, consciously worked out in his poetry, to address the leading statesman in Lower Canada. Engineering governance, also involved imbuing the boys with a sense of their right to speak with authority through a sophisticated culture of hexameter and rhyme.

In 1861, Riel received his first "Palmaré". Normally the "champions" received a book as a prize; however, that year was no ordinary year. In May of 1860, Garibaldi's army of one thousand had landed in Sicily, and in March 1861 Victor Emmanuel had declared a unified Italian state. The Republican armies laid siege to the holy city and the Pope's temporal authority was challenged. Reverberations were felt across the Catholic world. The award ceremony of 1861 provided an opportunity, for the Sulpicians and their students to reinforce their civic duty in an explicit fashion. M. Granet, the Superior of the seminary, asked the audience to recognize a great act of charity being performed by the students. They had decided to give up their prizes, so that the money would be sent as a donation to support the Papal States in the struggle against the

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<sup>122</sup> Riel "Toi qui conduis l'état, Illustre et fier Cartier!...", 68.

<sup>123</sup> David Ross McCord received this poem from the Cartier collection in 1919. See "Notes de David Ross McCord sur deux documents acquis par lui sur Louis Riel," C209 D.02, McCord Museum.

forces of liberalism and secularism. Instead of books as prizes, the students would receive a portrait of the Pope Pius IX.<sup>124</sup> In the absence of documentation, one can only speculate about Riel's understanding of this act of charity and mobilization of young Catholics to defend Catholic civilization.

The palmares represented Sulpician, and student, accomplishments. Riel, too, would have his moment in the spotlight. At the award ceremony, in June 1864, Riel and his classmate Octave Jannel presented a debate on the "Influence of Arts and Sciences on society." It was the climax of Riel's college experience.<sup>125</sup> This speech and its significance to Riel's life will be examined in greater detail below.

## 2.4 Student Life/Socialization

*...les pieuses associations et toutes les institutions louables en ce genre, qui sont une sorte de milice céleste sur la terre, pour-vu qu'éloignant les abus et la corruption, on les dirige selon les règles de leurs fondateurs, et que le souverain Pontife les applique aux besoins de l'Eglise universelle.*<sup>126</sup> – Jacques-Andre Emery, *Exposition de la Doctrine de Leibnitz sur la Religion* (1772)

As Jean-Marie Fecteau has argued, associations were a key means of mediating state authority in nineteenth-century Lower Canada.<sup>127</sup> Responding to the threat of liberal associations like the *Institut Canadien*, Catholic leaders encouraged the establishment of numerous associations to

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<sup>124</sup> *Le Journal de l'Instruction Publique*, August-September 5, no. 8-9, (1861), 145. "La partie musicale de la séance fut, comme elle l'est toujours au collège de Montréal, un succès complet. Après la distribution des prix, qui consistèrent seulement en un portrait de SS. Pie IX pour chacun des élèves, M. Billaudelle expliqua que ces derniers avaient fait le sacrifice des livres qu'on devait leur donner, la somme destinée annuellement à cet objet devait être ajoutée à celle qui a été souscrite pour la cause du Souverain Pontife, et il félicita, en même temps, les élèves sur cet acte d'abnégation."

<sup>125</sup> "Examens publics et distribution de Prix dans les universités, les Collèges, Académies et Écoles Modeles," *Journal de l'Instruction Publique* 8, no. 8 (1864): 112.

<sup>126</sup> "Themes – Morceau Choisis de divers auteur propres à servir de thèmes aux rhetoriciens," Themes en Rhétorique, I2: 6.2.2.1 – 141. See, Jacques-Andre Emery, *Exposition de la Doctrine de Leibnitz sur la Religion* (Paris: Leclerc, 1819), 89.

<sup>127</sup> Fecteau, "État et associationnisme au XIXe Siècle Québécois: Éléments pour une problématique des rapports état/société dans la transition au capitalisme," in *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada*, ed. Allan Greer and Ian Radforth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 135-162.

preserve collegiality and solidarity against a fragmentation of the social order.<sup>128</sup> For the Sulpicians, voluntary associations were more than extra-curricular activities; they also allowed students to practice social engagement in a morally responsible manner. Riel's presence is much more noticeable in this aspect of student life. He was drawn into the following student associations: the *Congrégation de la Sainte Vierge*, the *Académie Française*, and the militia. Pushing back against the idea of the "social contract," the Sulpicians did not see these associations as part of a liberal society, but as acceptance of a social duty. Yet, by their very nature they posed a threat to the ideals of an institution dedicated to clerical training and institutional isolation. Thus, in some respects they operated at variance with the college core principles.

#### 2.4.1 Congregation Society

The congregational associations were charged with the management and upkeep of the places of worship for the community. The Sulpicians organized two such associations at the *Collège*: one for the younger students, *Congrégation de Louis Gonazague*, and a second for the older students *Congrégation de la Sainte Vierge*.<sup>129</sup> The minutes for the assembly of the "Congrégation de la St. Vierge" records that on 14 September 1859, "Monsieur le Préfet de la Congrégation nous donna ensuite les noms de ceux qui s'étaient présenté pour être approbanistes: savoir, Mr[.]s Onésime, Herbert, Doucet, E. Hurtubise et Riel qui furent reçus comme tels."<sup>130</sup> The minutes show that Riel began to attend the meetings and in September 1860 applied for permission to perform his "act

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<sup>128</sup> Yvan Lamonde, *Gens de Parole: conférences publiques, essais et débats à l'Institut Canadien de Montréal, 1845-1871* (Montréal: Boréal, 1990); Yvan Lamonde, *Louis-Antoine Dessaulles, 1818 - 1895: un seigneur libéral et anticlérical* (Anjou, Québec: Fides, 2014).

<sup>129</sup> There was a congregation for the "grands," the "petits" and also the externs though I did not find references in the Sulpician archive to the latter during Riel's period. Hubert, "Petites Écoles et Collèges Sulpiciens," 433.

<sup>130</sup> "Compte Rendu de la 175ieme assemblée 14 Septembre 1859," *Congrégation de la Sainte-Vierge: Compte Rendu des assemblés 1841-1863*, I2: 7.5.18-6, APSSM.



of consecration”.<sup>131</sup> Three months later, at a meeting on 25 January 1861, Riel, along with his classmate Julien Girard were given permission to be consecrated on the 2 February, “le jour de la purification de la Sainte Vierge.”<sup>132</sup> The membership book records that they were formally accepted into the congregation on 7 February.<sup>133</sup>

The fragmented nature of the archive makes it hard to reconstruct the history of this congregation and its activities. Students were required to attend the monthly congregational meetings where they were reminded about Christian practices and prepared for the holy days. For example:

M. le Père de la congrégation [Charles Lenoir] ouvrit la séance en nous faisant la lecture de règles qui traite des pratiques que doivent chaque jour s’imposer les congréganistes pour passer chrétiennement la journée. Cette lecture fut suivi de quelques réflexions pieuses, dans lesquelles Notre Père nous recommanda d’être bien fidèles à ces différentes pratiques, surtout à l’approche de notre fête patronale et des 40 heures qui devaient avoir lieu quelques jours après. Il nous dit que ce temps devait être pour nous un temps de renouvellement dans la dévotion à la Sainte Vierge et autres saints sacrements.<sup>134</sup>

Students also helped perform mass and the rituals necessary in caring for the chapel. They practiced communion, said their prayers, collected donations, studied Catholic duties, and learned about Catholic hierarchy. Through membership fees, they purchased material for the maintenance of the chapel such as candles, as well as medals and books for the members.<sup>135</sup>

Through teaching of rites the *Congrégation* became a potent vehicle of conveying the Church’s authority over daily practices of the faithful. The congregation required regular

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> “MM Riel et Girard furent admis à faire leur acte de consécration le jour de la purification de la sainte vierge.” “25 Janvier 1861,” Congregation de la Sainte-Vierge: Compte Rendu des assemblés 1841-1863, I2: 7.5.18-6, APSSM.

<sup>133</sup> Congrégation de la Sainte-Vierge 1766-1878- Elections et admissions, I2: 7.5.18-1, APSSM.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> For example, the *Livre du Trésorier* for the Congregation de la St. Vierge details the following expenses for the month of November 1862: “1 Nov. acheter le present cahier £0.7s.6p.; dépense pour renouveler les insignes £2.9.8; Payer pour huit nouveau insignes £0.7.6.” Receipt of the following funds is also recorded: “1 Nov. encaisse £0.12.6; reçue de Mr Lenoir £0.2.6.”

recitation of the “petit office de la Sainte Vierge.”<sup>136</sup> Recited by confirmed clergy as well as devout laity, this *office* was considered a lay-man’s religious primer. It consisted of a cycle of prayers, hymns, and other readings. Each student was required to have a copy of a book. Like the reforms of 1850s studied by Hubert, the *office* was a technique of creating external and internal conformity in Christian practice.<sup>137</sup>

Members of the congregation carried out the mundane affairs of administration and bureaucracy also associated with governmental organization. Hierarchy was normalized through membership lists detailing aspiring members, members, and councillors. The council association was composed of a prefect, a secretary, and a treasurer, as well as various other roles. The positions were determined by a vote made by the councillors. The council was in charge of the membership list and training new members. Minute books recorded the roles assigned to each member and described their activities.

In October 1861 Riel was made a “servant of the mass”. The account books show that he paid his fees of 7s.5p in February 1862.<sup>138</sup> On 28 October 1862, Riel was appointed to the position of “reader” and at the end of the year he was elected a Councillor. He had just turned 18. Despite the shocking news of the death of his father, Riel began taking on greater responsibilities as a member of the student congregation. He was elected secretary in February of 1864.<sup>139</sup> The council recognized his zeal and on 26 October 1864, “de vive voix,” Louis Riel was elected as Prefect of the congregation. His election to this position speaks to Riel’s popularity with his

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<sup>136</sup> “Compte Rendu de la 184ieme assemblée 25 Janvier 1861,” Congrégation de la Sainte-Vierge: Compte Rendu des assemblés 1841-1863, I2: 7.5.18-6, APSSM.

<sup>137</sup> Ollivier Hubert, *Sur la Terre comme au Ciel: La gestion des rites par l’église Catholique de Québec* (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2000), 2–4. Hubert’s history challenges the “top-down” perspective and provides a history of the “lived religion” where rites were the site of dynamic contests for power.

<sup>138</sup> Congrégation de la Sainte-Vierge: Livre du Trésorier comptes des congrégationists 1862-1878: Collège de Montreal, I2: 7.5.18-8, APSSM.

<sup>139</sup> Two of his entries in the minutes are in the archives. Comptes-Rendus des assemblés, elections et admissions 1863-1928, Congrégation de la Sainte-Vierge, I2:7.5.18-6, APSSM.

fellows, his intellectual capabilities, his personal charisma and his devotion to religious obligations.

His prefecture was short-lived. In early December, 1864, Riel met with the Father of the Congregation, Charles Lenoir, and asked the Council to accept his resignation.<sup>140</sup> Riel had decided to leave college and continue taking classes only as an “extern,” and so it was no longer possible for him to attend the assemblies. The notes record that while his request was “just,” it was also painful. Lenoir congratulated the Prefect on his good intentions and accepted the resignation.<sup>141</sup>

As councillor and first assistant, Riel was involved in coordinating the consecration of the new chapel that had opened at the Grand Seminary, in the new “mountain-side” campus. According to *l’Echo du Cabinet de Lecture Parossial*, on 17 October 1864, bishops from St. Hyacinthe, Ottawa, Hamilton, Kingston, Toronto, and Trois Rivières as well as numerous other dignitaries, were all present for this “imposing spectacle.”<sup>142</sup> Relics from St. Théodore, St. Maurice, and St. Ambroise were uncovered and consecrated on the altar. Riel, as a leading counsellor, was charged with organizing the student presence and involvement in rituals and singing.

Things at the congregation did not always go according to plan. It was noticed that, in 1861, not all members had their books, and, in April 1864, objections were raised that some members did not know how to perform their duties at mass.<sup>143</sup> More problematic on February 1865, a scandal was reported, “le secret de notre élection avait été dévoilé.” It seems that voting

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<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> “Compte-rendu de la 209ième assemblée de la Congrégation de la Ste. Vierge tenue le 1 December 1864,” *Comptes-Rendus des assemblées, élections et admissions 1863-1928*, Congrégation de la Sainte-Vierge, I2:7.5.18-6, APSSM.

<sup>142</sup> *L’Echo du Cabinet de Lecture Parossial*, 15 November 1864. The paper records that students from the petit séminaire as well as l’école normale were present.

<sup>143</sup> Congrégation de la Sainte-Vierge: *Compte Rendu des assemblées 1841-1863*, I2: 7.5.18-6, APSSM.

for council members was supposed to have been kept secret. Lenoir had to bring order back by personally appointing a new council. Despite their ideals, the Sulpician directors were unable to totally control student activity which continued to skirt the boundaries of Sulpician discipline.

Riel's engagement with the college community and his advancement to a place of leadership indicates the ease with which he negotiated the social and political circles of the college. Amongst these future leaders of society, Riel was carving out a place of distinction for himself.

#### **2.4.2 Académie Française**

During his final two years of study, Riel participated in a literary circle called the Académie Française. According to its constitution, the goal of the Académie was “Donner à l'élite des élèves de Philosophie, de Rhétorique et de Belles Lettres des moyens spéciaux pour se former à l'art si important de bien lire, de bien écrire et de bien parler.”<sup>144</sup> While supervised by a Sulpician director, it was governed by its own council composed of a president, a vice-president, a secretary, a librarian, and other members. Despite serving Sulpician interests, the Académie, an extra curricular activity, also threatened the integrity of the Sulpician ideal.

It had a checkered past. On 12 November 1860, in response to student pressure, the Council of directors discussed a motion to re-establish the Académie. Past “abuses” particularly

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<sup>144</sup> Constitution de l'Académie du Collège de Montréal suivie des réceptions de 1855, 1862, 1863, P1: 11.3-104, APSSM. For other references to the Academy see “Procès-Verbal de la visite du Collège de Montréal par MM(s). Étienne-Michel Faillon P.S.S. et Constant-Vincent-de-Paul Guitter P.S.S. au nom de Monsieur de Courson, Supérieur Général de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice,” 1850, P1:11.3-109, APSSM; and Notes de M. Andre Nercam (Supérieur) directeur du Collège de Montréal 1850-1854, P1:11.3-110, APSSM; and “22 Janvier 1857 Procès Verbal de la Visite du Collège de Montreal faite par M. Granet Supérieur du Seminaire.” Comptes Rendus des Conseils 1850-1864, I2:1-3-4, APSSM.

at public events had forced its closure, but Charles Lenoir agreed to examine the proposal.<sup>145</sup>

However, the proposal was not approved until February 1862, and with reservations.

On a pensé généralement qu'il serait utile pour les élèves Français et plus encore pour ceux qui parlent anglais, de rétablir l'académie. Cette académie ne sera ainsi rétabli que par manière d'essai et sans donner de séances publiques. Les règlements qu'elle devra suivre seront discutés dans les assemblées particulières des directeurs après qu'ils aurent été rédigé par une commission nommée à cet effort.<sup>146</sup>

Director Rousseau managed to get approval for "public events" in January 1865, but, due to disruptions, and "abuse," the Académie was disbanded again in 1866. It was only re-instated in 1870.<sup>147</sup>

The positions on the council were determined by a vote. Membership was controlled by the councillors and members were given a special medal. This independence from the college director's council caused some concern: for instance, complaints were made when the Academicians wore their medals ostentatiously.<sup>148</sup> Such pretentiousness ran counter to the morality and humility encouraged by the directors, but was inherent in the idea of an elitist academy. Riel who came from a context where medals played a special role in treaty and diplomatic negotiations would have understood their symbolic power. The academy continued to be a source of worry for the directors, but, during Riel's period at the college, it was a useful means for organizing student life.

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<sup>145</sup> "12 November 1860" Comptes rendus des conseils 1850-1864, I2:1.3-4. APSSM. "On a répondu que cette académie avait été une occasion de desordres surtout à l'époque des séances publiques dont elle avait le monopole, et que de plus elle avait nui aux classes dont la Académiciens faisaient partie."

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> See the "Procès-verbal de la visite du Collège de Montréal faite par Monsieur Granet Supérieur du Séminaire le 23 Janvier 1865," and "Assemblée de 13 Octobre 1872," Comptes rendus des conseils 1864-1888, I2:1.3-5. APSSM. "Dans cette séance il a paru bon aux membres du Conseil de s'entendre sur quelque point concernant la Constitution de l'Académie du Collège qui suspendue pendant quatre ans été retablie il y a deux ans 1870."

<sup>148</sup> "Comptes rendus des conseils 1850-1864," 4 October 1863, APSSM: I2:1.3-4. "Quelqu'un de l'assemblée a fait remarquer que les membres de l'Académie avaient outrepassé leur pouvoirs en figurant *comme corps*, et avec leurs insignes dans les séances publiques, ce qui, selon lui, leur était défendu par leur règlement." Emphasis in original.

Despite the missing membership lists and minutes for the meetings between 1858 and 1864 there are traces of Riel's participation.<sup>149</sup> Riel took his oath and affixed his signature to the constitution in 1863.<sup>150</sup> One of Riel's poems, "Le Serpent," is found in a smartly bound cahier titled "Travaux des élèves 1863-1868."<sup>151</sup> This poem is the final version of the copy found in his Mile-End workbook included in *Poésie de Jeunesse* and the *Collected Works*.<sup>152</sup> Dated May 1864, the poem also contains a unique dedication. The poem contemplates the hideous nature and appearance of the snake. It is not a sympathetic poem, but a condemnation: "le monstre! Aborré dans toute à nature/Quel n'est pas son repaire ainsi que sa pâture." He concludes, "Ne vous laissez par lui jamais appercevoir. Que n'est-il toujours seul avec son désespoir!" The poem is followed by this dedication.

Accepte chère ami, ce léger souvenir:  
 Dans un temps éloigné de l'heureuse jeunesse  
 Quand le coeur ennuyé se plait à la tristesse  
 Il le vaudra peut-être un instant de Plaisir.

This dedication, found Académie's collection of works (*travaux d'élèves*), and unknown until now, upsets previous interpretations of this poem as one of ambiguous sympathy with the monster.<sup>153</sup> It is not a metaphor for Riel's own sense of isolation, but rather his warning against the dangers of a "coeur ennuyé" or "triste". A "light memory," the poem illustrates the importance of collegiality that the Académie imparted to Riel.

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<sup>149</sup> For the minutes of the meetings, see I2:5.5.1.2, APSSM. Unfortunately, the minutes for the years in which Riel was a member have been lost.

<sup>150</sup> APSSM P1:11.3-114 Constitution de l'Académie. The final pages contain the oath and the signature of 23 students, including that of Louis Riel.

<sup>151</sup> "Académie française travaux d'élèves," 1863-1868, I2:7.5.1.4, APSSM.

<sup>152</sup> Neither of these publications referred to this copy. Gilles Martel, Glen Campbell, and Thomas Flanagan, eds., *Louis Riel: Poésies de Jeunesse* (Saint-Boniface: Editions du Blé, 1977). Riel, doc. #4-012 in *CWLR*, 21–24. While the text is the same, this version includes a dedication and provides a more precise date.

<sup>153</sup> C.f. Martel, Campbell, and Flanagan, *Louis Riel: Poésies de Jeunesse*, 66–67.

On 29 June 1864, Riel and other members of the Academie sent a letter to thank their “vénéré” Director for his encouragement.

le beau jour nous offre l’heureuse occasion de vous exprimer notre amour et notre gratitude, devoir bien doux[?] que nous aimons à remplir avant de nous séparer. Tous nous savons de quel zèle de s’intéresse vous avez été animé pour le succès de l’académie, pour notre progrès dans l’aire de bien dire et de bien écrire; et tous aussi nous [...?] avons fait quelques [?] vers le but auquel teint notre petit cercle littéraire.<sup>154</sup>

As the date corresponds to the feast of St. Peter and Paul, this was likely sent to Pierre Deguire, a recently hired lecturer in *Rhétorique*, rather than to Charles Lenoir, the director of the college.<sup>155</sup> They presented him with “bouquets” or poems as a sign of their respect. It is possible that the poem above was Riel’s present. This letter is also noteworthy because the list of names includes important future correspondents such as Joseph Dubuc (vice president), Alphonse Ouimet (librarian), and Alexandre Deschamps (president).<sup>156</sup> Social networking was an important part of Sulpician training, and these fellows would become important allies for Riel after the Métis Resistance, as will be shown in chapter four.

The Académie was not only about rubbing elbows; it was also an opportunity to practice the skills of literary distinction. In 1870, Eustache Prud’homme recalled how he and Riel engaged in various literary battles in the “Cabinet Parroissial” and on the flanks of the Mountain, likely referring to the Académie.<sup>157</sup> Prud’homme recalled that Riel attempted to imitate Hugo, while Prud’homme copied Lamartine. This description of friendly combat and banter is

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<sup>154</sup> “Letter from the Academicians 29 June 1864,” *Addresses et compliments à Charles-Octave Lenoir* I2: 5.1.4-14, APSSM.

<sup>155</sup> A note in pencil also says “P. Deguire ptre.” The text itself also notes “Enfants de l’Eglise, quand vient la fête de notre premier Pontife pouvions nous ne pas non réjouir?” See “Letter from the Academicians 29 June 1864” *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> The full list of names is Alex[andre] Deschamps (president); [Joseph] Dubuc (vice-president); [Alphonse] Ouimet (librarian); Giroux, Raymond; Laroque, Jules; [Louis] Riel; [Télesphore] Dagenais; [Alfred-Joseph] Hamel[in]; [Aime] Dugas; [Narcisse] Troie; [Prosper] Ledret; [Elzear] Plante. Dubuc would become an important leader in Manitoba politics and one of Riel’s closest allies. Alphonse Ouimet would go on to found the *Francparleur*, a newspaper that supported Riel in the 1874 Amnesty movement, and write an 1886 pamphlet on Riel. Alexandre Deschamps became a priest, but corresponded with Riel in 1870s.

<sup>157</sup> “Louis Riel,” *L’Opinion Public*, 17 February 1970, 6-7.

reinforced through minutes taken at other sessions. Students defended rhetorical positions by adopting certain “roles.” More frequently they defended their own critique. For instance, on 16 January 1848, Mr. Chopin gave a refutation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s discourse on the Arts and Sciences, Mr. Schneider responded with a discourse on Mathematics, and was in turn critiqued for his materialism.<sup>158</sup>

The Academy also had its own library. Like the medals, this too was a mark of distinction, and reinforced the importance of social hierarchy and access to knowledge as a privilege for the elite. Various lists and scattered references show us some of the reading material that would have been available to Riel.<sup>159</sup> Along with classical literature of Horace, Lafontaine, Racine, and Shakespeare, were books by Catholic enlightenment thinkers like Denis Frayssinous; Sulpician historians like Étienne-Michel Faillon; and theorists of eloquence like Augustine Henry.<sup>160</sup>

### 2.4.3 La Milice Angélique

On 25 December 1862, at age 17, Riel joined the *Confrérie de la Milice Angélique ou du Cordon de St. Thomas d’Aquin* at the College.<sup>161</sup> He was listed as a member of the “apostolate de la prière” as late as 7 February 1864. While the fragmentary nature of these records prevents a comprehensive study of the activities of the *Milice*, its history can be partially reconstructed. The *Milice Angélique* started recording its members on 8 December 1862: sixteen students were

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<sup>158</sup> “Académie Française: Comptes-rendus des séances 1848-1851,” I2:7.5.1.2-1, APSSM.

<sup>159</sup> “List of books,” Académie Française, I2:7.5.1.2-2, APSSM. This list contains the names of some of Riel’s classmates and the books they borrowed. The *Cahier de Vers* [1860s?] gives another eight titles, see I2: 6.2.2.1-65, APSSM.

<sup>160</sup> E-M. Faillon, *Histoire de la Colonie Française* [1865]. Augustine Henry, *Histoire de l’éloquence: Eloquence Ancienne* [1860]. Denis Luc Frayssinous, *Defense du Christianisme* [1840].

<sup>161</sup> Listes de membres 1862-1869, association des Saint Anges “Milice Angélique” I2: 7.5.2-5, APSSM.



under the supervision of Charles Lenoir.<sup>162</sup> The patron saint was Thomas Aquinas and membership involved a vow of chastity.<sup>163</sup>

The *milice* was created in response to the increasingly volatile situation in the United States. After the outbreak of the American Civil War the city feared the violence of war would spill over the border.<sup>164</sup> Colleges across the province organized their own militias. The *Journal de l'Instruction Publique* announced “Le mouvement [to form a volunteer militia] s’est promptement communiqué aux maisons d’éducation; les élèves du Séminaire de Québec, dont les prédécesseurs ont acqui une si belle place dans l’histoire de la défense de la colonie, tant sous le gouvernement anglais que sous le gouvernement français, s’exercent régulièrement dans la grande salle de l’Université. La plupart des autres maisons d’éducation en font autant.”<sup>165</sup>

Enrolled in a “student corps,” Riel likely practiced drilling and marching. The *Milice* was part of training the future elite to be active as well as reflective, and ready to spring into motion when called upon. The militia is an excellent illustration of the notion that practice is an important part of knowledge production. Andrew Warwick argues that in the nineteenth century, physical activity and mathematics were both linked to changes in the increasingly industrialized

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<sup>162</sup> “Liste de Membres 1862-1869,” Association des Saints Anges (Milice Angélique), I2: 7.5.2-5, APSSM.

<sup>163</sup> See *Conférie de la Milice Angélique ou du cordon de St. Thomas d’Aquin* (Montreal: John Lovell imprimeur, 1863). Printed with the permission of Ignace the Bishop of Montreal. I2: 7.5.2-5, APSSM.

<sup>164</sup> The shifting of public opinion in British North America is well documented by Robin J. Winks, *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998), 12-21. Frank Murray Greenwood, *Legacies of Fear: Law and Politics in Quebec in the Era of the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

<sup>165</sup> See *Journal de l’Instruction Publique*, no. 1 (January, 1862): 14. In July 1862 the “Commandant des Forces” spoke at the public ceremony for école normale Jacques Cartier, “Lorsque le pays s’est trouvé un instant menacé, nous avons cru de notre devoir d’offrir nos humbles services pour sa défense. Votre Excellence a bien voulu les accepter, et après quelques mois d’exercices militaires, nous nous trouvons, nous l’espérons, en état d’exercer à notre tour les enfants qui seront placés sous nos soins. Nous nous efforcerons aussi de développer chez eux ces beaux sentiments de patriotisme et de dévouement qui éclatent à chaque page de l’histoire de notre pays.” In the audience were Lord Monck, and Members of Parliament, Macdonald, Sicotte, Doiron and McGee. *Journal de l’Instruction Publique*, no 7-8 (July-August, 1862): 131.

context.<sup>166</sup> Despite the image of pious clerics wrapped in their soutanes, these boys were being prepared for action.

The *Congrégation*, the militia, and the *Académie* introduced Riel to the importance of the association as a form of political organization. Societies in Lower Canada were sites of privilege and wealth, and the college directors, well aware that voluntary societies were the vehicles of subject formation in an increasingly liberal society, created their own.<sup>167</sup> At the same time, it was in the nature of these societies of youth to stir-up youthful resistance and hostility to authority. The stability, coherence, and centralization of the college tradition is frequently overstated.<sup>168</sup> The student societies were organized according to the central principles of the Sulpician ideal, but they were structured according to their own internal inconsistencies and tensions.

#### **2.4.4 Non-institutional associations**

In the winter of 1861-62, a British garrison occupied the student dormitories and the college classes were moved to the “priest’s farm,” on the flanks of Mount Royal, where a new building was being constructed. The move was somewhat premature as the furnace was not yet working.<sup>169</sup> Surprisingly, there is little discussion of the move in the archives. Only the professor of *Philosophie*, Charles Lenoir, noted in the grade register that “Le 27 Décembre 1861, vendredi matin, les élèves du college ont du laisser a l’imprevista notre vieille maison, et les transporter à

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<sup>166</sup> Andrew Warwick, “Exercising the Student Body,” in *Science Incarnate: Historical Embodiments of Natural Knowledge*, ed. Christopher Lawrence and Steven Shapin, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 288–326.

<sup>167</sup> Fecteau, “État et Associationnisme au XIXe siècle Québécois.” For a consideration of agriculture societies see Elsbeth Heaman, *The Inglorious Arts of Peace: Exhibitions in Canadian Society during the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 50.

<sup>168</sup> Hubert, “Le Collège Québécois: Réflexions sur la Porosité d’un Espace Traditionnel,” 84–85.

<sup>169</sup> Olivier Maurault, *Le Collège de Montreal: 1767-1967*, ed. Antonio Dansereau (Montreal: Edouard Gagnon, 1967), 32.

la montagne après 3 semaines passées dans leurs familles.”<sup>170</sup> Riel was in his second year of *Belles Lettres*, and the closure of the college meant that he had to find another place to live temporarily.

Riel was absent from the school for most of the semester: he had uncharacteristically poor grades, and not a single mark was recorded for him during the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester.<sup>171</sup> This was also the case for three other students who were not from Montreal (Samuel Trudel, Lucien Proulx and Theophile Giroux). Riel likely stayed with the Masson family in Terrebonne. The Bishop of St. Boniface, A.A. Taché, who visited Lower Canada in August 1861, might have organized this living arrangement. Riel developed a closer bond with his benefactress and her family because of his visit in December 1861. He wrote to Sophie Masson on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, thanking her for her hospitality, “Venérée Bienfaitrice...je suis sensible et confus de me voir l’objet d’une bienveillance dont je suis si indigne et qui n’a d’autres [...] de la générosité de votre âme.”<sup>172</sup> The informality and intimacy of later letters suggest his increasing ability to express himself with greater maturity, and his increasing familiarity.<sup>173</sup>

Whether it was during this school closure or not, Riel got to know the family well. This connection would be important for his future political networking because here he met Sophie’s son Louis-Rodrigue Masson. In June 1865, Riel would have been 21 and was looking for work. Rodrigue would have been 32, was already married, a Brigadier-major in the militia and had

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<sup>170</sup> Student Compositions, Philosophie et Rhétorique, I2:6.3.1-16, APSSM. Other records and administrative files from this period are either missing or incomplete. The gaps in the archives speak more to the chaos of the move than any description. The *Journal de l’Instruction Publique* 6, no. 7&8, (July/August 1861), 127, also discusses the disruption.

<sup>171</sup> The *Notes Hebdomadaire* show Riel was ‘hors’ for much of the term. See “Résultats scolaires” (Nos. 5-20), I2:6.3.1, APSSM.

<sup>172</sup> “Lettre à Sophie Masson, 29 December 1861” doc. #1-001 in *CWLR*, 1.

<sup>173</sup> In 1864, he received her regrets upon the death of his father, including a present and books “Lettre à Sophie Masson, 24 December 1864,” *Ibid.*, 1:8–9.

given up his law practice to oversee the Terrebonne seigneurie.<sup>174</sup> When the oblate inspector, Père Vandenberghe, wrote his assessment of Riel to Taché in 1865 he referred in the same paragraph to a former sergeant in the militia now looking for work. This may have been Masson and suggests that the two visited Vandenberghe together.<sup>175</sup> In 1873, Rodrigue became a principal advocate for the amnesty of Riel and eventually wrote a history of the Northwest. In the early 1860s, as the two young men met at the Masson family estate at the end of the Terrebonne rapids, Canadian and Métis histories were entwined.

Intimacy, and trust, were essential for the future leaders of society. Riel became close to his classmates as they advanced together from their classes in *Syntax* to *Rhétorique*. They included many future correspondents, Alexandre Deschamps, James Gallagher, Theophile Giroux, Jean-Baptiste Laberge, Emmanuel Lachapelle, Jules Laroque, Hippolyte Moreau, Lucien Proulx, Eustache Prud'homme, Zotique Racicot, and Samuel Trudel. They developed such a camaraderie that Prof. Delavigne was suspicious of their sharing and wrote of their exam grades: "M.M. Ce résumé d'une partie des matières étudiées pour le 1er trimestre offrant très peu de différence d'une copie à l'autre et étant en général très fidèles on a rapproché autant que possible toutes les copies du MMo. 1."<sup>176</sup>

At the college Riel established relationships with friends that would change his life. Friendships that challenged Sulpician authority sprang up. These relationships, while organized around the principles of the Sulpician college, were centripetal to the core ideal. This complex college experience was about students trying to find the balance between the ideals of a Sulpician *petit séminaire* and the obligations to society.

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<sup>174</sup> Andrée Désilets, *Louis-Rodrigue Masson, un Seigneur sans Titres* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1985).

<sup>175</sup> "Florent Vandenberghe Montreal at Taché, 16 July 1865," Fonds CACRSB Taché Correspondence T #3451-3454 SHSB.

<sup>176</sup> "1862 Rhetoric," Philosophie et Rhétorique Compositions. I2.6.3.1-16, APSSM.

## 2.5 Récit de Soi

The Sulpicians were not blind to the tensions within their curriculum. For them, it was always about finding a balance. Ultimately, the goal of the college was to produce students with a strong personality, confident in their abilities, convinced of their choices, and armed to take on social confrontation in a democratic and liberal environment. The primary aim of the Sulpicians was to create reflective subjects, not disciplined automatons. Hubert calls this “un apprentissage de soi-même par l’initiation à des méthodes réflexives.”<sup>177</sup> This ability to reflect deeply upon one’s own place in the world was the most critical part of Sulpician governance.

As shown above, the curriculum and student societies provided techniques for self-reflection. The Sulpicians had other, more focused, strategies to encourage the “récit de soi,” or telling of one’s self.<sup>178</sup> One is tempted here to employ a Foucauldian term “technology of the self,” but the récit was more of a narrative than a particular skill or *techné*. As Judith Butler writes, “The ‘I,’ its suffering and acting, telling and showing, take place within a crucible of social relations, variously established and iterable, some of which are irrecoverable, some of which impinge upon, condition and limit our intelligibility within the present.”<sup>179</sup> The Sulpicians required students to interact within a field of relations, visit their spiritual advisor regularly, go to confession and participate in religious retreats.<sup>180</sup> The key question of these retreats was to reflect upon their future: will you serve the Church or Society? The answers were spiritual, not rational.

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<sup>177</sup> Hubert, “Collèges Classiques et Bourgeoisies Franco-Catholiques (XVIIe-XXe Siècles),” 181.

<sup>178</sup> Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).

<sup>179</sup> Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 132.

<sup>180</sup> This section is based upon the conclusions drawn by Ollivier Hubert and Amélie Deschênes in their study of the private diary of a student at the college. See Hubert, “Collèges Classiques et Bourgeoisies Franco-Catholiques (XVIIe-XXe Siècles),” 169–81; “Intimité et individualité au pensionnat: La pratique du journal intime de Léandre-Coyteux Prévost 1869-1870” (MA Thesis, Université de Montréal, 2008).

Each student was appointed a spiritual advisor and was required to submit written proof of regular confession (*diligences*). Professor Delavigne left a lasting impression on Riel. Twenty-five years later, in 1885, while preparing for his trial, Riel would recall Delavigne with kindness.<sup>181</sup> These advisors, or directors of conscience, developed a strong relationship with their students based on generous, competent, and sustained attention which, while shaded with condescension, ideally developed into mutual respect and profound introspection.<sup>182</sup>

The religious retreat at the beginning of the academic term encouraged students to reflect upon their own ambitions and their vocation. The only reference to Riel's participation in a retreat is recorded in the *Compte-rendu de la Congrégation de la Sainte Vierge 1841-1863*.<sup>183</sup> However, other sources can help us to reconstruct this experience. There were two retreats, one at the beginning of the term, and one in December. With a variable duration from four days to one week, different retreats were held for college students, seminarians, and ordained priests. Critical to the operation of the college, these retreats were closely monitored.<sup>184</sup> It was a time for students to meditate, prepare themselves for their academic studies, and to cast off any immoral habits they had picked up over the summer. One of Riel's classmates, Samuel Trudel, a member of the *Association des Vacances*, wrote a memorandum in 1861 giving advice, including specific prayers, for students to follow during the summer.<sup>185</sup> At the beginning of the year the summer

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<sup>181</sup> "Lettre à A.-A. Taché," doc. #3-077 in *CWLR*, 140. Riel describes him as "un des directeurs de conscience les plus sages qui soient au monde."

<sup>182</sup> Hubert, "Collèges Classiques et Bourgeoisies Franco-Catholiques (XVIIe-XXe siècles)," 175.

<sup>183</sup> "Compte Rendu de la 175ième assemblée 14 Septembre 1859," *Congrégation de la Sainte-Vierge: Compte Rendu des assembles 1841-1863*, I2: 7.5.18-6, APSSM.

<sup>184</sup> The inspection and visit of M. Faillon in 1854-5 commented on the laxness of the retreat and encouraged the administration to ensure that it was a full three days. "Procès-Verbal de la visite du Collège de Montréal par MM(s). Étienne-Michel Faillon P.S.S. et Constant-Vincent-de-Paul Gutter P.s.s. au nom de Monsieur de Courson, Supérieur Général de la Compagnie de Saint-Sulpice."

<sup>185</sup> See *Association des élèves du Petite Séminaire de Montreal pour le temps des vacances*, I2:7.5.10-1, APSSM. There is no evidence that Riel was part of the association.

*diligences* were examined to make sure that they were complete.<sup>186</sup> If they were not, a student risked expulsion.

The goals of the retreat were first, “Aider à connaître la volonté de Dieu, ce qui regarde ceux qui ne sont pas encore légitimement déterminés;” and second, “faire comprendre la nécessité de se bien préparer à entrer dans l’état quel qu’il soit où Dieu appelle, ce qui regarde tout le monde.”<sup>187</sup> During the retreat, students would pray for guidance, study the principles of a “calling” and consult sage and prudent people for advice regarding their future.

From the Sulpician perspective, a religious vocation was neither a choice nor a matter of academic merit. It was really about the individual learning to listen to God and was mediated by exercises of meditation, reflection, and spiritual conversation with advisors. The opening prayer for a religious retreat undertaken by the philosophers in 1867, took Psalm 119 as its inspiration: “Le prophète Roi dont j’ai emprunté les paroles qui m’ont servi de texte n’avait rien de plus fréquent à la bouche que cette prière: Seigneur faites moi connaître la voie dans laquelle vous voulez que je marche.”<sup>188</sup> Not everyone was called, but you could only be “called” if you were listening. There were strict warnings to those who did not listen. The lecture notes for a retreat in December 1868 detailed the life of a brilliant young man who was called to the church, but who failed to listen:

c’était une vocation claire et évidente pour lui. Mais l’amour de la mondanité, la faiblesse, l’inconstance ont rendu ma voix impuissante. Je suis assuré que Prêtre, ce jeune homme aurait été bon, fidèle, et une des gloires de l’Eglise du Canada. Aujourd’hui, il se meurt lentement, et son âme est encore plus malade que son

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<sup>186</sup> Two or three days before the retreat, the director required the professors to make a list of the names of the confessors of each student. Pensioners had to be confessed at the *Petit Séminaire*. Externs were allowed to be confessed in their parish. The lists would be sent to the director who ensured that each student had completed their confession. “La Retraite,” *Coutumier du Petit Séminaire 1802-1829*, P1: 11.3-61, APSSM.

<sup>187</sup> *Retraite sur la vocation*, I2: 7.4.1-1, APSSM. This second instance is clarified by the following warning, “il y a deux erreurs de règlement à éviter: je suis décidé donc je n’ai plus à me préoccuper; --je suis pour le monde, donc je n’ai pas besoin de tant de précautions.”

<sup>188</sup> “Aux élèves de philosophie 2 année du collège de Montreal du 29 Mai au 2 Juin 1867,” *Retraite sur la Vocation*, I2:7.4.1-1, APSSM.

corps; elle est morte, morte à la grâce; morte à Dieu, morte à l'honneur. Ce n'est plus qu'un cadavre, et ce cadavre chève de s'aller chaque nuit dans les orgies du jeu, de l'ivresse et d'autres plaisirs plus infâmes encore...<sup>189</sup>

Humility and respect for God's will determined a student's mission, so the Sulpicians encouraged the attitudes of both authority and submission.

Two of Riel's poems "Le Juif de Marseille" and "Un homme de religion" show how the issue of vocation absorbed him.<sup>190</sup> The latter discusses a hypocrite who seems to be religious, as he performs the necessary prayers, confessions, and attends mass. But these are merely superficial, and he dies condemned to eternal punishment. The first poem similarly concludes:

Et puis il disparut avec un cri perçant  
Enveloppé dans une flamme impure.  
Malheur à qui se livre à l'imposture!  
Nous sommes faits pour le vrai seulement  
Dieu sait qu'aucun ne trompe impunément.<sup>191</sup>

These poems are not necessarily autobiographical, but they do reflect the themes of Sulpician teaching. The message is particularly poignant because the first poem was written just after he left the college. Later in his life he would return to the same struggle about his choice for a future. In 1876 in a letter to Bishop Taché Riel explained that in 1873 he had undertaken a retreat, and that his spiritual advisor had recommended that he was "pour le monde".<sup>192</sup>

At the college, the formation of political subjects was a result of dialogue rather than discipline. Out of these conversations emerged a "narrative" of self, or a *récit de soi* based upon reflection. As Butler points out, "giving account of oneself" is a practice of constructing an idealized concept built upon previous discourses, which are not always present in one's

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<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Louis Riel, docs # 4-019 & 31 in *CWLR*: 36 & 62-63.

<sup>191</sup> Riel, "Le Juif de Marseille."

<sup>192</sup> During his exile to the states, Riel wrote, in a letter to Taché, January 08, 1876 "Je vous aime, parceque, Dieu daignant me punir en ce monde de m'être dit Juif, vous a choisi, vous, dépositaire princier de sa puissance, afin que, d'un côté, vous me fissiez expier ma coupable défection; et que de l'autre; vous empêchassiez mes ennemis de m'ôter la vie, si je me soumettais à ses décrets." See doc.#2-007, in *CWLR*, 24-28.



conscious.<sup>193</sup> The “self” is always relative to a constellation of discourses. That does not mean that individuals are not responsible for their own identity or thinking, but, in an unlikely concordance, Butler and the Sulpicians agree, reflecting upon this situation provides the means for developing a *récit de soi* would situate students in a manner that they could act. At its base, the Sulpician programme was about producing moral reflective agency.

## 2.6 The active student body

The Sulpician student was not a disciplined *docile* body, but an *active* reflecting body.<sup>194</sup> These students were not the rank and file but independent minded and self-disciplined directors of society. A unique series of photographs taken at the college offers an opportunity to show how the Sulpicians developed a sense of self, carefully negotiating the tensions between discipline and reflection, between the city and the seminary. Contextualizing Riel’s own *Carte de Visite* with these photographs illustrates his successful mastery of this tension in college culture.<sup>195</sup>

In 1867, just two years after Riel left, William Notman was contracted to photograph the classes at the college. These photographs were designed to celebrate and commemorate the College and to highlight the new campus “on the mountain.” This was the first time the Sulpicians organized class photographs, suggesting that these were a deliberate use of visual media to cultivate a particular image.<sup>196</sup> The choice to use Notman’s studio also suggests a

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<sup>193</sup> Concerned about the implications of the relationship of Other discourses upon the nature of reflectivity, Butler argues that “a theory of subject formation that acknowledges the limits of self-knowledge can serve a conception of ethics, and indeed responsibility.” *Giving Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 19.

<sup>194</sup> Joyce, *The State of Freedom*, 278–82.

<sup>195</sup> There are nineteen photographs of various groups of boys at Montreal College, Montreal, 1867, see I-26762 to I-26765; I-26794 to 26804; I-26833 to I-26837 and 26894 Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum of Montreal. The archives of the Sulpician seminary have preserved smaller prints of the Method and Versification classes, which list the names of the professors and students on the back. “Classes et groupes d’élèves,” I2:6.1.5-1, APSSM.

<sup>196</sup> Dominique Deslandres, “Histoire et Mémoire de Soi,” in *Les Sulpiciens de Montréal: une histoire de pouvoir et de discrétion, 1657-2007*, ed. John Alexander Dickinson et al. (Montréal: Fides, 2007), 85–115.

celebratory motive.<sup>197</sup> He was, after all, the “Photographer to the Queen”.<sup>198</sup> The archives at the McCord museum show that, as opposed to the smaller (and cheaper) prints, the original negatives for these photographs were 10 x 13.7 cm.<sup>199</sup>

Using the new “mountain” campus as the setting for the pictures underlines earlier arguments about the new campus in the Sulpician identity. It reinforced the ideal of a college education that was preserved from the world. A discursive response to the modern and industrializing city, the photographs communicate a pastoral oasis, qualities that were increasingly important with a growing proportion of interns.<sup>200</sup> The importance of the location is suggested by the inconvenience it must have caused for a photographer who needed to carry the wet plates and his developing equipment up to the site for immediate developing. It would have been far easier to accomplish in the studio. One must attempt to imagine the extra effort (and presumable expense!) involved in a photographer loading a horse and wagon with camera and developing equipment and driving across the city and fields, from Bleury Street up to the remote college on Sherbrooke Street. Nor was this a one-day event but, judging by the Notman cataloguing system, the pictures were taken on three different days.<sup>201</sup> In addition, taking pictures

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<sup>197</sup> They may have been taken in preparation for an alumni reunion as 1867 was the centennial of the College. There is no record in the archive of the College regarding intentions with these photographs. While the year 1867 was commemorated, evidence for this is fragmentary. All that I have found describes a covenant by the class of Rhetoric in 1867: “le but de l’union ou “Conventum” que nous fournissons entre nous est de nous aider à conserver les heureux liens que l’amitié a jeté autour de nous durant notre séjour au Collège.” See “Règlement du Conventum 1867” I2:9.6-1, APSSM.

<sup>198</sup> Roger Hall, Gordon Dodds, and Stanley Triggs, *The World of William Notman: The Nineteenth Century through a Master Lens* (Boston: D.R. Godine, 1993), 38.

<sup>199</sup> Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum of Montreal.

<sup>200</sup> “Comme la population collégiale totale enregistre globalement une baisse entre 1820 et 1860 et que, par ailleurs, le nombre de pensionnaires reste stable, il faut conclure que l’établissement, qui était un modeste externat à la fin du XVIIIe siècle, est progressivement devenu un pensionnat durant la première moitié du XIXe siècle.” Hubert, “De La Diversité Des Parcours ...,” 44.

<sup>201</sup> My thanks to Nora Hague at the McCord archives who pointed out that the gaps in the catalogue numbers within the series suggest that this was more than a one day event. Because of Notman’s cataloguing system the jumps between numbers indicate that the photographer took three separate “bunches” of plates.

outside introduced a host of technical issues that could have been more easily controlled in a studio (e.g. proper lighting, and support for the subjects).

The photographs can be split into two distinct genres, roughly corresponding to age: the first depicts the younger students, the second the older. The pictures show how the students in the lower classes are organised in tiered rows.



Figure 3, *Elements*



Figure 4, *Syntax*



Figure 5, *Methode*



Figure 6, *Rhétorique*

Placed shoulder to shoulder and in straight lines, the composition of the photographs follows a disciplined and rationalized distribution of bodies.<sup>202</sup> The students were younger and there were more of them and therefore more organization was required. Student discipline is emphasised by the fact that all eyes are turned towards the camera. As Louise Bienvenue remarks in her analysis

<sup>202</sup> In her study of the photographs of lacrosse players, Gillian Poulter writes “Symmetry requires forethought; iconologically, it represents hierarchy and order. By comparison, asymmetrical compositions appear to occur naturally, without concern for rank or hierarchy.” *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Sport, Visual Culture and Identity in Montreal, 1840-85* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 126–27.

of a photograph of a Montreal Reform school's calisthenics class: the symmetry "trahit un goût évident pour l'ordonnement des corps et pour la symétrie, comme si leur distribution rationnelle dans le temps et dans l'espace était susceptible d'instiller, par effet de parallélisme une même droiture de l'âme."<sup>203</sup> Discipline is also emphasized by the college uniforms.

According to Jennifer Craik "Uniforms became an extension of the social body and its techniques; making training visible; constructing a particular habitus; and negotiating identity and the self."<sup>204</sup> The frock coat and cap distinguished the college students on the street from the rest of the public. At the same time conformity equalized the financial differences between students: as the more wealthy look humble, and the poor more respectable. Decoded in this manner, the pictures seem to represent the disciplinary and homogenous institutional nature of the college.

The photographs of the upper level classes are very different. Instead of carefully tiered rows, there is an asymmetric composition and casual postures.



Figure 7, *Versification*



Figure 8, *Belles Lettres*

<sup>203</sup> Bienvenue, Louise. "Sortir de la délinquance par l'expérience institutionnelle: Une histoire racontée par les voix et par les corps (1873-1977)." *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique Française* 65, no. 2-3 (2011-12): 313.

<sup>204</sup> *Uniforms Exposed* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2005), 13-14.



Figure 9, *Philosophie*

While still a largely homogenous student body, these pictures lack the rigidity of the previous photographs. Some students hold books, one student seems captured in a moment of reflection upon something he has just read, others appear to be contemplating some abstraction or revelation. Every attempt is made to erase the “pose,” and to present “natural” attitudes. In *Versification* two students are even holding hands and staring into each others’ eyes in a symbol of fraternal love.<sup>205</sup> The classical poses of meditation emphasize the humanist nature of their studies and the legitimacy of the Sulpician Society as a Christian community, or family, rather than a cold institution. The photographs are meant to be read as if the external character represents a true measure of their inner spiritual state. These boys are not bound by external regulation, but they bind themselves through *self*-governance. These images would appeal to viewers, including parents, students, and others who could see the development of students to a stage of maturity.

Authority and power may be more carefully disguised in these latter pictures, but it is not effaced, rather the discipline has been internalized. Photos of the college band betray these intentions: the first is carefully ordered; the second is studied chaos.

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<sup>205</sup> It is not necessary to see this love as one of sexual nature. For the politics and culture of sexuality in the classical colleges in Montreal, see Bienvenue, Louise, and Christine Hudon, “‘Pour devenir homme, tu transgresseras...’ Quelques enjeux de la socialisation masculine dans les colleges classiques québécois (1880-1939).” *The Canadian Historical Review* 86, no. 3 (2005): 485–511.





Figures 10 & 11, College Band

This attitude of masculine nonchalance is clearly a performance that renounces “artifice” and celebrates independence as the pinnacle of self-sufficiency. James Adams writes, “Like the Hegelian master the Victorian gentleman... invariably depends on forms of recognition that he professes to disdain.”<sup>206</sup>

The picture (taken around 1864-1866) of Louis Riel below shows that he successfully absorbed these lessons of self-discipline.<sup>207</sup> It is a performance of conformity, but not erasing agency. “Dressed” in this discourse he follows the norms but remains a moral agent.



<sup>206</sup> Adams argues that the gentleman “is thus implicated in the logic of the dandy.” *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), 10.

<sup>207</sup> Public Archives of Canada, C 1532. The following section is influenced by my readings on male beauty, especially Linda Dowling *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (New York: Cornell, 1994); and Paul Deslandes, “The Male Body, Beauty and Aesthetics in Modern British Culture,” *History Compass* 8, no. 10 (2010): 1191–1208. As they point out, male beauty is part of the political order.

In Riel's picture, the "individualist" character of the Sulpician tradition is on full display.<sup>208</sup> Riel conformed to a classic contemporary archetype: a young man, dressed in his blue college coat. The book in his right hand and bowtie emphasizes his status. The clothing is simple but respectable, not ostentatious but sober. The clean-shaven face and combed hair are marks of a well-groomed youth. It is a conventional *carte de visite*.<sup>209</sup> It was a calling card of sorts, or a display of credentials sent to family, friends, and professional contacts. His coat and bowtie declare his civilized manhood. The camera does more than simply capture the likeness of the subject, it situates him within a socio-political order.

Riel's eyes directly confront what Laura Mulvey has called the "male gaze," and therefore they demand recognition and assert equality.<sup>210</sup> Framed in this manner, the photo renders the positionality of the subject and the object ambiguous. As a portrait, the photo represents agency. Emily Boone, analysing the *carte-de-visite* of a fugitive slave in Montreal, argues, "the portrait becomes an agent, revealing the subject's qualifications for freedom."<sup>211</sup> While the directions of the photographer would certainly have influenced this picture, taken in a studio with a predetermined purpose, it also reflects Riel's own attempt to project an image of himself.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Hundreds of such pictures exist in the archives of the Seminary and in the McCord museum's collection of Notman's nineteenth century photographs. A conventum for the graduated students was held twelve years after the students had graduated from Rhétorique. The membership list includes Riel's classmates: Troie, Filiatreault, Allard, Bedard, Brunet, Chauret, Carriere, Cinquars, Gelinat, Harel, Kavanagh, Lachapelle. "Specilège des Conventums de 1867-1944," I2:9.6-18, APSSM. See also Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum of Montreal. For a discussion of the individualist character of the Sulpicians see Christopher J. Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation in Catholic Culture: The Priests of Saint Sulpice in the United States from 1791 to the Present* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), xiii.

<sup>209</sup> On the *carte de visite* see Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *A.A.E. Disdéri and the Carte de Visite Portrait Photograph* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>210</sup> A.W. Eaton, "Feminist Philosophy of Art," *Philosophy Compass* 3, no. 5 (September 2008): 873–93.

<sup>211</sup> Emily Boone, "The Likeness of Fugitivity: William Notman's Carte-de-Visite Portrait of John Anderson," *History of Photography* 37, no. 2 (2013): 221–34.

<sup>212</sup> Indigenous subjects understood the power of the photography and used it to their own advantage to mark the performance in their own way. See E. M. Hight, and G.D. Sampson. "Introduction: Photography, "race" and post-colonial theory." In E. Hight and G. Sampson (Eds.) *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place* (New

Of course, Riel's intentions were mediated by the Sulpician culture and identity described above. Everything in the photograph reflects a complex of codes expressed within the college. Yet at the same time, the intentions of the student, while not necessarily interruptions of the Sulpician codes, are also present and show how students narrated themselves into the Sulpician culture, performing as it were their own sense of agency. In this sense like the student associations, the *carte de visite* shows how students absorbed and took ownership of Sulpician cultural codes.

## 2.7 Debate

Louis Riel reached the pinnacle of his college career on 5 July 1864 when he presented his "Defence of the Arts and Sciences" in a debate at the end of year award ceremony.<sup>213</sup> As the champion of Sulpician learning, Riel argued that enlightenment, under the careful direction of religion, was a noble pursuit pleasing to God. He was nineteen years old and in his first year of philosophy. A close examination of this debate<sup>214</sup> allows us to explore the irony of a Métis student defending "Western civilization." This document, unknown to earlier biographers, makes possible a profound reassessment of Riel's experience at the college and provides a window into his ability to narrate himself into the Sulpician tradition, even while engaging in a continuous dialogue with "western civilization." It allows us to mark the unfolding of the essential tensions, and the constant overlapping of discourses at the college. It also shows how students sought a balance between the disciplinary field and moral agency that has been elaborated above.

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York: Routledge, 2002), 1-20. In this photograph Riel is not objectified as a "native" subject nor is he subject to the colonial appropriation and classification of Indigeneity. He is not the subject of sentimental nostalgia or violent dispossession. Contrast his performance with the studies by Anne Maxwell, *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the 'Native' and the Making of European Identities* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2000).

<sup>213</sup> "Plaidoyer sur l'influence des sciences et arts sur la société," I2: 6.3.3-3 6/6, APSSM. The full text of this debate can be found in the appendix to this dissertation. Because the original original French is available in the appendix I have translated important quotes into English in the text which follows.

<sup>214</sup> For a more complete examination of the debate see Max Hamon, "Contesting Civilization: Louis Riel's Defence of Culture at the Collège de Montréal," *Canadian Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (March 2016): 59-87.



The debate was a playful engagement with a much older debate between Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Charles Borde. Riel took the part of Borde and his opponent, Octave Jannel, the part of Rousseau. However, as I argue, Riel's speech, examined for its overlapping and interrelated content and context, reveals his own intentionality.<sup>215</sup> By emphasizing his intentions, the irony of, and the motivation for, a Métis student defending "western civilization" becomes explicit. He intentionally deployed his Indigeneity to add weight to the matrix of epistemological dichotomies of civilized/savage and morality/corruption. The Sulpician context, replete with tropes and rhetoric, provided him with access to the ideological debates behind the "civilization" project, but Riel brought original literary and philosophical content to the occasion.

The moderator introduced the debate somewhat theatrically: "M. M. Parmi les diverse questions qui ont fait l'objet de notre cours de Philosophie, cette année, se trouve celle de l'influence des sciences et des arts sur la société."<sup>216</sup> The philosophers had not intended to debate the issue, but their sense of honour was piqued when Jannel (Maxime in the text) chose to defend the cause of ignorance, and Louis Riel (Probus in the text) took up the challenge. Such verbal sparring indicates the combative nature of the debate. This was a performance after all. The weapons of logic and rhetoric are supplemented with eloquence and wit.

According to the manuscript, a competitive but playful tone is apparent from the beginning. When Jannel clarifies his position—that he will not argue against science itself but, rather, defend the cause of virtue in front of virtuous men,<sup>217</sup> Riel asks, with an irony leaning

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<sup>215</sup> Sternberg defines content and context as, respectively, "the text as pattern of meaning and effect" and "the reality behind the text." See Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 15.

<sup>216</sup> All subsequent quotes are from "Plaidoyer sur l'influence des sciences et arts sur la société," I2: 6.3.3-3 6/6, APSSM.

<sup>217</sup> Compare this with Rousseau's opening: "Ce n'est point la science que je maltraite, me suis-je dit, c'est la vertu que je défends devant des hommes vertueux. La probité est encore plus chère aux gens de bien que l'érudition aux doctes." All quotations are from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours qui a remporté le prix à l'académie de Dijon: En l'année 1750* (Geneve: Barillot et Fils, 1750), 2.

toward sarcasm, how Jannel, with his brilliant and extensive erudition, is able to argue that learning is not virtuous. Jannel shows himself equal to the banter when he replies by noting how clever and witty his opponent is. “Tant mieux,” he declares, “le triomphe de l’ignorance en brillera d’un plus vif éclat.” Indeed, he refuses to accept the blame for his own education. He explains that as a child he did not reflect on the consequences of education; now he is older and sees the error of his ways.

After a caution from the moderator to be “moderate” in their tone, the debate proceeds. Jannel, employing the adage that an idle mind is the devil’s workshop, says: “Oisiveté est la mère de tous les vices,” calls learning idleness and depicts scholars sprawling on the lawn, “sur une fauteuil moelleux à l’abri.” He proceeds to argue that the sciences and arts are the product of passions and moral vice: curiosity led to physics, pride led to medicine, and so on. Geometry, for instance, was invented because someone believed his neighbour was encroaching on his property and feared losing an inch of land.<sup>218</sup> According to Jannel, the sciences are the result of immoral attempts to alter, or, rather, ruin, the work of the Creator.

Riel mocks his opponent with wry humour, pointing out that even if it was rest that attracted him to study, surely experience must have taught him otherwise. He asks if Jannel would suggest to a man of thirty or forty years of age to crawl on all fours because he was born that way.<sup>219</sup> Riel points out that Jannel seems to be recommending that we all live without reason,

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<sup>218</sup> This section “À quoi, je vous le demande, serviroit l’histoire s’il n’y avoit ni guerriers, ni conspirateurs, ni tyrans?” is another passage borrowed from Rousseau’s first discourse: “Que deviendrait l’histoire, s’il n’y avoit ni tyrans, ni guerres, ni conspirateurs?” Rousseau, *Discours qui a remporté*, 33.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.* “Vraiment à vous entendre il faudroit en bonne logique qu’un homme de 30 or 40 ans marchât à quatre pieds parceque étant enfant il marchait ainsi.” This line was made famous in Voltaire’s review of Rousseau’s discourse. Maurice Cranston, *The Noble Savage: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1754–1762* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 9. But, Voltaire was, in fact, echoing his friend, Charles Borde, who used the metaphor first. Charles Borde, *Second discours sur les avantages des sciences et des arts* (Avignon: Francois Girard, 1753), 35: “On croit faire illusion en avançant que l’ignorance est l’état naturel de l’homme: oui a peu-près comme il est naturel de marcher à quatre pieds, parce que les enfans ne peuvent d’abord soutenir sur leurs jambes.”

like animals. The invention of the sciences, he points out, was the result of necessity rather than passion. Medicine obviously comes from the need to cure disease, and history serves to trace the virtues of men. He then rebukes his opponent for failing to consider that these vices are to be found throughout human history and not only amongst the educated.

Both speakers draw upon ancient history. Jannel argues that the greatest virtue was in the innocence of early “man” and praises the Scythians, Spartans, and Romans. Learning, he claims, only corrupted their natural virtue. Riel contests this simplified version of history and gives an overview of the barbarity of the crimes of the ancients. Borrowing from Charles Borde, he says, “Open the history of the Greeks and you will find nothing but murder and violence in the same era when this precious ignorance was in all its purity: their heroes were murderous knights errant ... The Spartans legalised domestic theft and murdering of infants, while Rome was nothing but shepherds and adventurers when it was founded.” He concludes that science reforms that which ignorance corrupts and that nations enlightened (“les nations éclairées”) by science appeared on the world stage in various degrees of glory and virtue, while barbarity (“la barbarie la plus honteuse”) continues in places where ignorance prevails.<sup>220</sup>

Jannel replies that other nations, “which do not know the principles of morality,” practice it much better. Reiterating Rousseau’s “noble savage,” he argues that once learning starts it is impossible to stop its corruption. (These “noble nations” include the “immoral” North American Indigenous peoples, and, given Riel’s own identity as a Métis, the argument is an *ad hominem* whereby Jannel draws attention to the inconsistency between his opponent’s “race” and his argumentation.) Unfazed, Riel’s response is sarcastic: “Oh, look, here is a future philosopher.”

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<sup>220</sup> See Borde, *Second Discours*, 12–13: “Lorsque la précieuse ignorance des Grecs étoit encore dans toute sa pureté: leurs héros étoient des chevaliers errant qui n’étoient occupés qu’à massacrer des brigands publics, à châtier des peuples séditieux, à détrôner des tyrans.”

He explains that while cannibals might not speak ill of their neighbour, as the civilised would do in a salon, instead they roast him and eat him while singing and dancing.

Jannel replies, a bit hastily, “At least they are frank.” This causes the moderator to intervene. And Jannel is forced to clarify that he meant that the facade of politeness is hypocrisy. The debate continues, and Riel, while admitting that politeness is a refinement used to hide weakness and crimes, asks whether this is not a benefit. Politeness is an art, says Riel: “Experience has taught us what is displeasing, and an infinity of reflection on beauty, honesty and decency make up a precious art, that of living well with men.” In a classic argument for civilization as a process of increasing self-restraint, he points out that, because people are forced to disguise their vices, they are continuously reminded that they should correct themselves. Moreover, their vices will not be contagious. Furthermore, he says, false politeness is not restricted to the educated: “Such passions are common to the ignorant and the educated.”

Frustrated, Jannel turns to the arts. He blames the palaces, gardens, and salons decorated with statues and paintings for spreading vice. What is worse, he says, children see wickedness before they can even read. Riel dismisses as pure exaggeration Jannel’s argument that the arts have been indecently exposed to the public (“exposés à l’admiration publique”), or, as he puts it more figuratively, “généralement prostitués.” Jannel continues that sciences and arts spread impiety, error, absurd systems, miserable novels, licentious poems, and obscene books. He argues that human life is too short and too burdened with passions to ever achieve true knowledge and that half-knowledge is abominable. Learning has allowed the spread of ideas that deny morality and has encouraged theories that humans are just wolves—soon they will be worse than the Iroquois! He appeals to God with pathos: “Oh heaven! At least protect our young

country. I cannot help thinking without grief (*un douleur amère*) about the labours of Canadians to advance the sciences in these last years.”

In a lengthy conclusion, Riel argues that learning is a worthy occupation for a nation of God. After touching upon Jannet’s arguments, Riel responds with his own misty vision of national progress: “Canada will grow in the eyes of other nations and it will shine with a brightness and glory that will attract universal admiration; it will be a new example of what the arts and sciences, when guided by religion with wisdom, can do for progress and the splendour of a people.”

Riel’s speech can also be examined by looking at what was edited out. The following sentences were crossed out:

Far from being distressed about this new impulse (*nouvel élan*) for the arts and sciences which is manifest in our young country (*notre jeune pays*), I am delighted with all those who have in their heart our well being and prosperity. Yes, the true enlightenment is spreading, let the instruction of the Canadian youth (*jeunesse canadienne*) be strong, profound and extensive. Let the studies be completed and conducted with wisdom and skill, as they already are in the houses entrusted with higher education, then all of the liberal professions (*professions libérales*) will be at the proper level and a spirit of immortal glory will shine.

Consider that this was crossed out as part of an editing process. Did he find it difficult to sustain the argument from the perspective of “notre jeune pays”? His finished version was less personal, “le Canada... aux yeux des nations.” It is impossible to tell, but clearly he felt that Canada had a good argument for “illuminating” other parts of the world. This then raises the question, from what position was Riel speaking?

### **2.7.1 An exemplar of culture**

To answer the question of Riel’s positionality requires looking more carefully at the implications of the performance. It is useful to consider the performance as situated within a broad cultural

field and to draw upon Ollivier Hubert's invitation to consider the college, according to Pierre Bourdieu's concept. Bourdieu used the "field" as a technique to "think relationally" about evolving stakes and positions of agents.<sup>221</sup> The following analysis draws upon. It is a space on which multiple positions and trajectories can be plotted.<sup>222</sup> In another context he has described it as "space of play within which the holders of capital struggle."<sup>223</sup> Using Bourdieu's concept of the "field" allows us to approach Riel's debate at the college from different angles simultaneously and to understand his own intentions within that space.

On the one hand, the debate was scripted, a presentation of conventional Sulpician ideas regarding civilization and learning. One could read it as a sanctioned performance or an institutional script. Twice previously, in 1800 and in 1821, the college organized the same debate.<sup>224</sup> Close examination reveals enough similarity to argue that Riel and Jannel had seen the earlier text. On the other hand, Riel was innovative. We need to read it dialectically, drawing out the tensions between the articulation of orthodoxy and creative innovation.

The verbatim quoting of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Borde, and the 1800 text was expected. Indeed, what to twenty-first-century readers might appear as plagiarism, to the instructors of a

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<sup>221</sup> The "cultural field" was developed to understand how agents and their social positions can be understood. "By field of power, I mean the relations of force that obtain between the social positions which guarantee their occupants a quantum of social force, or of capital, such that they are able to enter into the struggles over the monopoly of power, of which struggles over the definition of the legitimate form of power are a crucial dimension." Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 230. Bourdieu is vehement that the cultural field differs from the Foucauldian apparatus, which he called an "infernal machine," because of struggles for agency. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 102.

<sup>222</sup> Ollivier Hubert, "Collèges classiques et bourgeoisies franco-catholiques (XVIIe-XXe siècles)," 113–36. See also Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 94–115; Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, trans. Laetitia C. Clough (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>223</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field," trans. Loïc Wacquant, *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 1 (March 1994): 5.

<sup>224</sup> "Plaidoyer sur l'influence des Sciences et Arts sur la Société," [1800] I2:6.3.3–3 1/6, APSSM. In the earlier debates, there were five characters: Juvenal, Lucius, Maxime, Candide, and Probus

nineteenth-century Catholic college was evidence of good scholarship.<sup>225</sup> The rhetorical conventions encouraged students to reproduce traditional responses.<sup>226</sup> The arguments in the debate reflected common positions, shared commitments to knowledge, and rhetorical moves that were developed within the institutional enlightenment-civilization paradigm espoused by the Sulpician college. They were exemplars of the Sulpician knowledge paradigm.<sup>227</sup>

As a Métis, however, Riel's speech had an added significance. The dissonance of Jannel's remark about the Iroquois as a benchmark for immorality in his conclusion is a clue to an essential tension in this debate. The elephant in the room is Riel's Indigeneity. (As noted above, in at least one poem Riel identified with the "souriquois" in their battle against the cat.) In June 1864, the champion of Sulpician learning is, potentially at least, a "sauvage." In this light, Jannel's earlier veiled *ad hominem* that Riel's identity as an Indigenous person contradicts his argument for civilization becomes significant. The Indigenous presence at the college provided a cultural and political context for the Sulpician civilization project and gave the debate a significance surpassing mere academic exercise. Other students in the audience may even have had, to borrow Vine Deloria's memorable phrase, an "Indian princess" for a grandmother or a

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<sup>225</sup> For a parallel argument, see Christopher Tindale, "The Use and Force of Rhetorical Strategies in Riel's First Speech," in *Riel's Defence: Perspectives on His Speeches*, ed. Hans V. Hansen (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2014), 126.

<sup>226</sup> Galarnau, *Les collèges classiques au Canada français*; Yvan Lamonde, *La Philosophie et Son Enseignement au Québec (1865–1920)* (Montreal: Hurtubise, 1980). Rhetoric for the Sulpicians, as for the Jesuits, was "the driving force of their ethics, their spirituality, exegesis, anthropology and theology." Recent studies of rhetoric emphasize rhetoric as a "mode of inquiry." See Marc Fumaroli "The Fertility and Shortcomings of Renaissance Rhetoric: The Jesuit Case," in *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences and the Arts 1540–1773*, ed. John O'Malley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 91.

<sup>227</sup> According to Thomas Kuhn, a knowledge paradigm frames the analysis of knowledge as a construction of community with its own culture. Knowledge is not disembodied, but rooted in cultural practice. "The study of paradigms is what mainly prepares the student for membership in the particular scientific community with which he will later practice ... That commitment and the apparent consensus it produces are prerequisites for normal science." Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 10.

direct Indigenous background.<sup>228</sup> The Indigenous presence at the college is difficult to trace in the Sulpician archives. The evidence is fragmented and partial—for instance, in the margin of an 1851 class list, a professor describes Peter Murray as a “sauvage de Sault Saint Marie.” But such identity markers are not noted anywhere else. Nonetheless, the debate was a drama of triumphant civilization—a Métis effectively disclosing the Sulpician program while simultaneously exposing the irony, and folly, of Jannel’s defence of ignorance. Riel was an embodiment of this *Gesta Dei per Francos* for the Sulpician authorities in Montreal and perhaps in Paris itself.

Seen from Riel’s perspective, this argument for civilization must have been disconcerting enough to jar him into a reassessment of the paradigm. We must imagine a young Riel standing in front of a crowd and giving this speech. How did he understand the event and what impact did it have on his own perspectives? Paige Raibmon reminds us to ask what a performance meant to those that were doing the performing. Like Kwakwaka’wakw performers confronting exotic tourism, Riel too chose to perform for reasons of his own.<sup>229</sup> Through this choice Riel did more than merely reproduce the paradigm in his performance; he also reflected and transformed these basic ideas to chart a path of resistance to colonial powers.<sup>230</sup> At this performance, Riel had a chance to reflect upon the argument for civilization and, at the same time, to begin a new vision

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<sup>228</sup> Deloria Vine, *Custer Died for Your Sins* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1988). See “Remarques sur les Elements et syntax,” I2:6.2.2.1–8, APSSM. One can only speculate about the Indigenous heritage of three other students from Sault Saint Marie in 1867: Galley, Gauthier, and Lee. Frank McKay has discussed some of the difficulties of identifying Black subjects and the implications of racial obfuscation in Montreal’s past, *Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal 1760–1840* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>229</sup> Paige Raibmon, “Theatres of Contact: The Kwakwaka’wakw Meet Colonialism in British Columbia and at the Chicago World’s Fair,” *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 2 (June 2000): 157–92; Deloria, *Playing Indian*.

<sup>230</sup> As Kuhn points out: “Almost always the men who achieve these fundamental inventions of a new paradigm have been either very young or very new to the field whose paradigm they change ... these are men who, being little committed by prior practice to the traditional rules of normal sciences are particularly likely to see that those rules no longer define a playable game and to conceive another set that can replace them.” Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 90.



that would fuse European and Indigenous worlds together. Subverting the Sulpician paradigm, Riel opened a space to show “Indian progress” and therefore also autonomy.<sup>231</sup>

Students could renegotiate their position and the stakes in the field by employing the cultural and social capital available to them. Educational systems are not totally open to negotiation because some constraints and controls are already in place before the students even take their seats. However, in fashioning a cultural and political field of knowledge, intellectuals, even young college students, were responsible for paradigm shifts. Thus the college is best understood, not as a place of programmatic clerical domination, but as a site of overlapping centripetal discourses. Centripetal in the sense that these discourses are curved inward, or inflected, by the Sulpician cultural presence on the field (as opposed to centrifugal where they move away from a centre). Even as Riel learned the rules of grammar and distinction at the heart of imperial culture,<sup>232</sup> he was also invited to reflect and provide transformative critiques of “Western Civilization,” the core of the Sulpician education.

That same summer, a young Wilfred Laurier was giving a similar end of year speech for the Faculty of Law at McGill.<sup>233</sup> The future Canadian leader would go on to develop a politics that would radically transform the direction of the liberal party in Quebec and in Canada. Riel’s performance must also be understood in this transformational context. These kinds of award ceremonies were part of a longer trajectory in a student’s career. By participating in such public events, Riel had situated himself on the same field of power as others at the heart of Lower Canadian society.

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<sup>231</sup> Displays of “Indian” progress could, through subversion, open a space for expressions of Indigenous autonomy and independence. Heaman, *The Inglorious Arts of Peace*, 285–95.

<sup>232</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Black Cat Press, 1981), 46. Recent examinations of colonial regimes stress the lack of coherence and fragmentation. For instance, Stoler and Cooper speak of “competing agendas” and “cleavages.” Cooper and Stoler, *Tensions of Empire*, 6–7.

<sup>233</sup> “Examens publics et distribution de Prix dans les universités, les Colléges, Academies et Écoles Modeles,” *Journal de l’Instruction Publique* 8, no. 8 (1864): 111.

## 2.8 Dismissal

Riel was dismissed from the college in March of 1865, mere months before the final term. Since December 1864 he had been an extern, boarding with the Grey Nuns.<sup>234</sup> Early in the year there were complaints (unspecified, in the report sent to Taché) about his late night sorties and by the end of March he was summoned by Director Lenoir. This story, based upon letters from administrators, has allowed other biographers to suggest he left Montreal a failure, with “nothing to show” for eight years of schooling.<sup>235</sup> In fact Riel “completed” his schooling in 1863 when he graduated from *Rhétorique*, and he had the certificate to prove it.<sup>236</sup> In light of Riel’s active participation in student life and his success at the school, this conclusion of failure needs to be revisited.

Context helps explain Riel’s decision to leave. Almost half of the class left the college during the year 1864. Even fewer would begin their studies at the Grand Seminary—the Sulpicians were careful to accept only those who were truly “called” to the service. The majority of students did not complete the final year. From Riel’s cohort an unusually large number (seven

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<sup>234</sup> Two letters to Sophie Masson written in December 1864 confirm that he was staying at the General Hospital. Riel, docs. #1-002&003, *CWLR*, 8–9.

<sup>235</sup> For previous biographers the letters of Vandenberghe and Lenoir sent to Taché served to confirm Riel’s reputed insanity even as they paint a picture of his eccentric behaviour, unkempt looks and perhaps madness. More problematically, they serve as a measure for assessing the entirety of Riel’s Montreal experience. For some, this meant that Montreal was the source of his later mental breakdown or millenarian visions. His failure at the college is thus tied to the later “rebellion.” Martel, considers Riel to be the tragic victim of great deceptions: “Sa propre vie lui apparaît marqué du sceau de la fatalité et il lutte presque frénétiquement contre l’envahissement du découragement.” *Le messianisme de Louis Riel*, 107. Flanagan, speaks of his foolishness and bravado, summarizing his life at the college: “He who had come to Montreal with such high hopes at fourteen departed at twenty-one with nothing to show for his years of effort.” *Louis “David” Riel*, 21-25. Hartwell Bowsfield is even more explicit: “At school Louis was lonely and withdrawn and so restless and unsettled that his teachers were convinced that he would never be a good priest.” *Louis Riel: The Rebel and the Hero* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971), 20.

<sup>236</sup> Lenoir wrote to Taché that he issued a certificate for Riel. Charles-Rolland Lenoir to Alexandre Taché, 26 August 1865, T3553-3556, Correspondence, Archives de Société Historique de Saint-Boniface. The certificate was increasingly replaced in the nineteenth century by the school leaving certificate (graduation).

students of twelve) left in the middle of their final year. It suggests administrative failure, though there is nothing in the archive to confirm this.

The first report regarding Riel's departure from the college comes from an Oblate priest, Florent Vandenberghe, who wrote to Bishop Taché in St. Boniface in July 1865: "J'ai été au college: M. Lenoir est absent dans une tournée de vacances. J'ai fait la connaissance de M Larue, à qui j'ai parlé de Riel. Quoiqu'il ne doit pas au fait de cette affaire, j'ai pu comprendre que ses messieurs ont été fort peiné de ce qu'est arrivé."<sup>237</sup> Vandenberghe had just returned to Montreal from a tour of the Northwest and Taché must have asked for a report. Vandenberghe hinted at a scandal, but cautioned him not to be discouraged by "les penibles déceptions." Vandenberghe then recounted his interview with Louis Riel in Montreal and expressed his own scepticism of Riel's abilities: "Pauvre garçon! Quand je l'ai vue avec sa chevelure herissée et avec un ton fort fashionable, je lui ai accordé peu de confiance. Il a du vous écrire..."<sup>238</sup>

Director Lenoir did not write to Archbishop Taché until August, although by his own admission he was clearly aware of Taché's anxiety over the events.<sup>239</sup> He reassured Taché that Riel had been not dismissed for moral reasons. Rather Lenoir had received complaints that Riel was skipping classes and spending time in the city, not even returning at night. The Director first confronted him, gave him a "paternal" warning, and even begged him to be more diligent, but the dalliances in the city continued and he could not permit Riel to continue to break the rules. The Director, somewhat defensively, expressed his deep regret at the Sulpicians' failure to send Riel back as a priest: "Mais Dieu ne semble pas l'avoir appelé à cet état. ... le destinait à cette sublime vocation. Je crains biens que ce pauvre enfant ne s'en soit pas rendu digne—dans tous

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<sup>237</sup> "Vandenberghe to Taché, 16 July 1865," Taché Correspondence, T#3451-3454, SHSB.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> Charles-Rolland Lenoir to Alexandre Taché, 26 August 1865, T3553-3556, Correspondence, Archives de Société Historique de Saint-Boniface.

les cas il vaut mille fois mieux qu'il soit un [Chre]tien ordinaire que d'être exposé à devenir un mauvais prêtre."<sup>240</sup>

Riel hinted at his own frustration with his superiors. In an uncomplete poem written on 9 March 1865,<sup>241</sup> he described a director of a college (*un homme haut placé*) reprimanding a young student who had

L'air haut.  
Une apparence  
d'indépendance.

Riel's awareness of a critique of independence is worth exploring. Both Vandenberghe and Lenoir drew upon tropes and the interpretation of Riel as a deviant—unschooled and undisciplined. Vandenberghe's term *Chevelure herissée* was a descriptive term used in literary descriptions of wildness and implied the pagan character of the subject.<sup>242</sup> *Herissée* also suggested insubordination or lack of discipline. The phrase "un ton fort fashionable," much like the term "dandy," worked to normalize masculinity, specifically to criticise ostentatious displays and describe youthful (or feminine) lack of reflection.<sup>243</sup> Within the Sulpician context this was "une marque de mondanité."<sup>244</sup> In the wake of clerical disappointment over the fact that Riel did

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<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> "Un homme haut place," doc. #4-019, in *CWLR*, 33.

<sup>242</sup> Chateaubriand in 1831 used this term to translate "frizzled hair" in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In Latin-French dictionaries the term was explained with reference to the Gorgons or other pagan Gods from Germanic and even Indian mythology. The same dictionary contains the following definition for "ton fort fashionable": "Homme à la mode, qui suit les modes avec empressement, qui les exagère—Prétentieux."

<sup>243</sup> James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995).

<sup>244</sup> In *La Vie de M. Lantages* Étienne-Michel Faillon recounted in a remarkable parallel how Jean-Jacques Olier, the founder of the seminary, found fault with another seminarian "Il y avoit surtout dans sa démarche quelque chose qui blessait un peu M. Olier: c'étoit un léger mouvement cadencé qu'il donnoit à son corps. Ce mouvement quoiqu'il pût n'être pas répréhensible dans un homme du monde, auroit été regardé comme une marque de mondanité et un signe de insufficance dans un ministre des autels." *La Vie de M. Lantages: catéchiste de Saint-Sulpice puis supérieur du séminaire du Puy*, Paris 1830, p. 23.

not have a vocation, Riel was charged with being a dandy.<sup>245</sup> Father Vandenberghe described a boastful, irresolute and unkempt man, and Riel's hair served as a metonymic device to describe the student's failure to live up to the expectations of masculine self-discipline. Similarly, Lenoir, also justified his decision based on a disreputable character. He uses the word *pauvre* three times. And he dismissed "la folie de sa conduite" which he saw as the result of a "dérangement." Almost bitterly he concluded, "j'ose espérer qu'il trouvera bien quoique je redoute beaucoup pour lui la vivacité de son imagination et ses travers de caractère."<sup>246</sup>

The disappointment of the clerics was expressed through common tropes of criticism. Judging Métis and other Indigenous peoples by their flamboyant appearance was common practice for colonizers.<sup>247</sup> A recent arrival from Europe, Vandenberghe clearly did not see the same promise in Indigenous peoples as did Archbishop Taché, who had lived in Red River for so many years.<sup>248</sup> At the same time, Riel was not the only subject of reproach at the college. The *Académie Française*, where Riel was a member, was also accused of encouraging its membership of being overly proud.

Beyond the character assassination these texts provide interesting details which have not received sufficient attention from previous biographers. Vandenberghe writes:

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<sup>245</sup> For a discussion of the figure of a dandy see Catherine R. Mintler, "From Aesthete to Gangster: The Dandy Figure in the Novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald." *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 8, no. 1 (2010): 104–129. Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints*.

<sup>246</sup> Charles-Rolland Lenoir to Alexandre Taché, 26 Août 1865, T3553-3556, Correspondence, Archives de Société Historique de Saint-Boniface.

<sup>247</sup> The paintings of Peter Rindisbacher and Paul Kane are perfect examples. See Gloria Bell "Oscillating Identities," *Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law and Politics* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013). For instance Rindisbacher's *A Halfcaste with his Wife and Child* (c.1825) "is a dandy who confidently holds a hunting-gun...the wearers took pride in their appearance" (p. 30). This is not to deny the importance of fashion to the Métis identity, indeed "outlandish" fashions were worn as a mark of identity. Farell Racette, *Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and the Expression of Metis and halfbreed Identity* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2004).

<sup>248</sup> Tache was frequently confronted with prejudice of French Priests toward Indigenous peoples Oblates François-Xavier Bermond and Valentin Végréville were two particularly difficult members of Taché's personnel. Neither was this simply a matter between French and colonials but Taché repeatedly confronted Lower Canadians' ignorance of Saint Boniface. Notably, he defended the Métis against the disdain of French Canadians among the Grey nuns and denounced their prejudice to the Superior General in Montreal. Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, 95.

Riel aussi est venu me voir: il m'a raconté son histoire et comment il se trouve en possession d'une somme de 1000£ pour faire le commerce des pelleteries à la Rivière Rouge. Je vous avoue que son histoire me paraît bien extraordinaire: je ne sais s'il faut y croire ou non: un anglais lui aurait prêté mille £: sur la simple foi d'un méconnu.

If Riel had really managed to convince someone to lend him one thousand pounds (roughly \$150 000 today), Vandenberghe's term "pauvre" seems particularly ironic. Vandenberghe was skeptical about this story, and so have been his biographers. Thomas Flanagan's translation further undermines Riel's credibility. Rather than translating "lui aurait prêté" as "allegedly lent him," Flanagan rendered it much more ambiguously as "is supposed to have offered him."<sup>249</sup> While the former suggests Riel entered into a financial contract, the latter depicts Riel as a figure of charity. Further, while the former casts doubt on the story, the latter questions whether Riel ever received the money at all.

Do we accept Riel's story? No record has been found confirming the loan. But, clearly, Riel did possess enormous powers of persuasion. It begs the question, what kind of contractual obligations would Riel have with a loan of one thousand pounds? He could leverage his reputation as a "son of the Northwest," but now Riel was also able to draw upon a reservoir of Lower Canadian cultural capital from the Sulpicians and to cash it in, as it were, for economic capital.

Riel was looking for some kind of employment. According to George Stanley, the death of his father weighed heavily upon him.<sup>250</sup> André Montpetit suggested that he briefly articulated law with Rudolph Laflamme. "Je me rappelle avoir aperçu Riel à Montréal en 1866 ou 1867. On me dit alors qu'il étudiait le droit chez M Laflamme."<sup>251</sup> However, there is no other evidence to

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<sup>249</sup> Flanagan, *Louis "David" Riel Prophet of the New World*, 21. Stanley was fairer writing that Riel had "obtained" the money.

<sup>250</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 29.

<sup>251</sup> André Napoleon Montpetit, *Louis Riel à la Rivière du Loup* (Levis: Mercier, 1886). See also Mousseau, *Une Page d'histoire*, 11.

support this claim, and Flanagan questions this because of Laflamme's *rouge* political affiliation. However, Laflamme was also a graduate of the Sulpician college and Riel may have been in touch with him through this network that he established during his time in Montreal. Thomas Flanagan argued that Riel had fallen in love with Julie Guernon in 1864, and that he left the college not out of a sense of responsibility as the new head of his family, but as a furtive lover.<sup>252</sup> Riel did eventually sign a marriage contract with Marie-Julie Guernon, but within a week, presumably after her parents annulled it, he left Montreal. The question of why he was looking for work remains open.

Indeed, there was cause for disappointment, but it would be hasty to draw straightforward conclusions. A poem written to the Director of the Collège on 4 November 1865, likely as part of the celebration of the name day, illustrates his enduring respect. Riel lamented the passing of time, but found comfort in his memories.

Ainsi que des ondes rapides  
 Le temps aura beau s'envoler,  
 Dût-il me couronne de rides,  
 Il ne fera que redoubler  
 Le plaisir de mes souvenirs.  
 Sous les plus éloignés climats  
 Et dans toutes les circonstances  
 Non, je ne vous oublierai pas!<sup>253</sup>

"Redoubler le plaisir de mes souvenirs" are not the sentiments of a frustrated or disappointed drop-out. Riel concluded the poem with the note "Je demeure, ... celui qui chéris votre protection."<sup>254</sup> Surprising words perhaps, unless Riel did not leave with bitterness.

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<sup>252</sup>Thomas Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion 1885 Reconsidered* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 17–22.

<sup>253</sup> "Honoré Directeur," doc. #4-032 in *CWLR*, 64–66.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

A lilting chanson addressed to his friends served as a farewell and indicates his mixed emotions:

Voici que bientôt je vous laisse;  
Je vais partir pour mon pays.  
Si mon coeur est plein d'allégresse  
Croyez qu'aussi j'ai des ennuis  
Car c'est parmi vous que la vie  
M'a fait jouir de tant de biens.  
Et sur cette terre chérie  
J'ai formé de si doux liens.<sup>255</sup>

These words, evoking relationships formed on the land (*sur cette terre chérie*), are significant. It was difficult to leave, and he felt torn, "L'amitié m'arrache des pleurs." These were the kinds of sentiments and words, coming from a strong sense of *wakhootowin*, that would have such a grip upon his French-Canadian allies in the future.

Despite all of this (*pourtant malgré tant de faveurs*), the poem continues, he still dreamed of his country where all his possessions (*les miens*) remained.<sup>256</sup> These were of course his mother and father. He repeated it for emphasis, "Je veux voir ma mère chérie," and the same for his father's tomb. Somewhat ambiguously, he promised to return to Montreal: the final line, also repeated was "Et je reviens à mes amours." Given that this is the echo of the previous verse, "C'est vers vous que je reviens," he intended to return to his friends in Montreal. It was certainly melancholic, and Riel presented himself as sensitive and passionate. Perhaps he sought to draw allusions to *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, where pensive suffering is a romanticised joy.<sup>257</sup> An aspiring young poet, Riel had plunged into the romantic currents of his day, and, now freed from

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<sup>255</sup> "À mes amis," doc. #4-038, in *CWLR*, 82.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> Another more cynical perspective would be to compare him to the sentimentality Jean-Jacques Rousseau as described by Clifford Orwin, "Moist Eyes—Political Tears from Rousseau to Clinton," *AEI Bradley Lecture Series*, 14 April 1997. Accessed online: <http://www.aei.org/publication/moist-eyes/print/>. 6 August 2017.



the fetters of the college reading list, was experimenting with a romantic fever that caught up so many of his fellows.<sup>258</sup>

He was sad to leave, but it was harder still to stay in Montreal. Riel would maintain a regular correspondence with his friends and would keep close watch on the political events at the heart of the culture and city that he had come to know so well. He sustained his links with Montreal through fond memories, but memory is always a mixture of pain and pleasure. The ambiguity of his childhood in Montreal was no exception; what was exceptional was how he understood this metropolitan world from a Métis perspective.

## **Conclusion**

This education provided Riel with cultural capital in the form of traditions, knowledge, and political legitimacy that he, like others, would draw upon in his future career. As a graduate, he could access networks and knowledge controlled by the political elite in French-Canada. Despite the power inequalities, he saw himself as an agent with his own moral compass. The experience of having elucidated the civilized/savage paradigm in Montreal gave Riel the irony that was necessary for confronting Canada's annexation. Riel, as an Indigenous subject concerned about questions of "civilization" and its relationship to the settler-state, learned to channel the epistemology that underscored Canadian colonization to defend Métis interests. It was not just his "charisma," a magical internal manifestation of natural ability, but a trained and prepared reaction to a specific constellation of power.

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<sup>258</sup> The most famous of whom would be Émile Nelligan also a college graduate. See *Poésies Complètes, 1896-1941* eds. Rejean Robidoux, Paul Wyczynski (Québec: Fides, 2004).

Did this education create a “double consciousness,” such as described by W.E.B. Dubois?<sup>259</sup> I think not; such a clear dichotomy is unhelpful. Riel’s education was not a stark choice between “civilization” and Indigenous culture. In this respect, it differed from the education other Métis received in Red River described by Jonathan Anuik.<sup>260</sup> Also unlike the sons of mixed-race unions that Sylvia Van Kirk studied in the increasingly racist environment of 1860s British Columbia, Riel’s success suggests a more ambiguous relationship with French-Canadian society that had yet to make up its mind about the Métis.<sup>261</sup> In travelling to Montreal, Riel entered a contact zone, or as Bettina Bradbury has argued, a “diasporic space” where “genealogies of dispersion tangled with those of staying put.”<sup>262</sup> Riel’s education was part of a broader history of interactions between the Northwest and Canada’s metropolis.<sup>263</sup> Following Bradbury, one could argue that Riel’s encounter with this diasporic space allowed him to play with the ideas of “Civilization” even as he learned the threats that it also posed. Rather than splitting into many parts, Riel was taught to assess the merging of worlds, and, through careful self-governance and self-reflection, to channel them into a discourse that would suit his own purposes.

Riel was a full partner in the negotiation for culture and civilization in Montreal and in the Northwest. His avowal to have a foot in both worlds, and to make them speak to each other

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<sup>259</sup> “It is a particular sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others.” W.E.B. Dubois, *Souls of Black Folk* Project Gutenberg Ebook [URL: [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)] accessed June 24, 2017.

<sup>260</sup> Jonathan Anuik, “Forming Civilization at Red River: 19th-Century Missionary Education of Metis and First Nations Children,” *Prairie Forum* 31, no. 1 (2006): 1–16.

<sup>261</sup> Sylvia Van Kirk, “Tracing the Fortunes of Five Founding Families of Victoria,” *BC Studies* 115/116, Autumn/Winter (1997-98): 149–80.

<sup>262</sup> Bettina Bradbury, *Wife to Widow: Lives, Laws, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 29.

<sup>263</sup> Other historians have made the same observation, though without reference to his education specifically. Jim Miller, “From Riel to the Métis,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 69, no. 1 (March 1988): 1–20. Douglas Owram, “The Myth of Louis Riel,” *Canadian Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (September 1982): 315–36.

and understand each other would challenge the political nature of Canadian Confederation. As the next chapter will show, the implications of this challenge would be spelled out in 1869-70. His education in Montreal is the key to understanding his leadership of the Métis Resistance, but not in any straightforward manner. Even as Riel transformed the Métis movement he worked to transform politics at the heart of Confederation.



## Chapter 3

### Transformation of the Red River Public Sphere

In the lead up to the Red River Troubles of 1869-70, public opinion was increasingly invoked as a source of legitimacy in the political arena. The political climate had changed since the campaign for free trade. Settler colonial ideas about authority, particularly “public opinion,” clashed with Indigenous politics. The logic of Indigenous peoplehood and kinship was challenged by ideas of sovereignty invested in a universal public will. Riel’s ability to navigate between the “opinion” making that had currency in the settler colonial world and the Indigenous worldviews of Red River was essential to the success of the Métis resistance. To create the Red River “Provisional Government” Riel merged ideas about relationships between people and the land with settler reasoning about citizenship and political representation.

The political events of what has come to be known as the Red River Resistance have already been described in detail by George Stanley, William Morton, and Jack Bumsted.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, a short summary of these events is in order. In October 1869, the Métis parishes, upon hearing that the Canadian government had purchased the Northwest from the HBC, organized themselves into a national committee which first blocked Canadian survey groups and then turned back the Canadian appointed Governor William MacDougall at the border. In quick succession the Métis under Riel’s direction occupied Fort Garry, imprisoned the leaders of a

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<sup>1</sup> George Francis Gillman Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961); William Morton, *Manitoba: The Birth of a Province* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Record Society, 1965); J. M. Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations: The Red River Settlement and the Emergence of Manitoba, 1811-1870* (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 2003). See also Norma Hall, “A Perfect Freedom: Red River as a Settler Society 1810-1870” (MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2003); Darren O’Toole, “The Red River Resistance of 1869-1870: The Machiavellian Moment of the Métis of Manitoba” (PhD Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2010); and Jack Bumsted, *Louis Riel v. Canada: the Making of a Rebel* (Winnipeg: Great Plains Publications, 2001), 42-99.

counter rebellion, and convinced the English parishes to send representatives to a public convention. When new Canadian delegates arrived to negotiate terms for entry into Canada, Riel, acting as President of the Métis National Committee, convinced the English parishes to unite with the Métis and form a Provisional Government. Together they drew up a “Bill of Rights” which outlined terms for entry into Canada. These terms were accepted, ultimately leading to the passage of the Manitoba Act in Ottawa which incorporated Manitoba as a province into Canada. However, as a result of increasing violence and political instability, one of the most outspoken Canadian rebels, Thomas Scott, was executed on the orders of a Métis court martial. The death of Scott, when it was discovered he had been a member of the Orange Order, would become a rallying cry for Canadian opposition to the French and Catholic Métis that led the movement. Despite their acceptance of Métis terms, the Canadian government sent troops under Colonel Garnet Wolseley to suppress the Métis Government. As Governor Adams Archibald was instructed to arrive after the military force a chaotic military occupation ensued. It has come to be known as the Red River “Terror.”<sup>2</sup> During the suspension of civil law soldiers and citizens took “revenge” upon the inhabitants for their “rebellion”. Métis were beaten, killed, and raped with impunity. Stores were plundered, police were attacked and printing presses were smashed. It was a bad start for “Confederation.”

The history of the “Time of Troubles” is well known, as is the history of political institutions and legislation.<sup>3</sup> What follows here is an argument that the idiom of “the public,” in

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<sup>2</sup> Ruth Swan and Edward Jerome, “‘Unequal Justice’: The Metis in O’Donoghue’s Raid of 1871,” *Manitoba History* 39 (Summer 2000): 23–38. For a complete list of the assaults carried out in retribution see Jean Hall “Aftermath: the Reign of Terror,” Provisional Government of Assiniboia, URL: <https://hallnjean2.wordpress.com/chronology-after-the-resistance-1870-1871-2/aftermath/>. Accessed 20 January 2017.

<sup>3</sup> The history of the legislature can be read in “Sessional Journal of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia,” Red River Disturbance collection, MG3 A1-15, PAM. Also of interest is the Government of Manitoba’s online history by Norma Hall, Clifford Hall and Erin Verrier, *A History of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia/le Conseil du Gouvernement Provisoire*, 2010. Accessed online 14 January 2015, URL: [http://www.gov.mb.ca/ana/pdf/mbmetispolicy/laa\\_en.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/ana/pdf/mbmetispolicy/laa_en.pdf).

its various manifestations (opinion, space, etc.), disrupted older forms of authority. The public designated a new source of authority to which both the establishment and its critics could appeal. As described in Chapter One, during the nineteenth century, the Council of Assiniboia found itself unable to stifle the processes of political contestation and found itself under increasing pressure to participate in public politics like petitions and militia raising. While the new authority vested in the “public” undermined traditional structures, it presented an opportunity to Louis Riel who had been trained for such public politics.

Drawing upon the idiom of the “public” Riel carved out a space for public deliberation that was based upon the principle of universal access. The mobilization of an imagined virtuous public against authoritarian rule offered significant political leverage. As any other British subject, Riel asserted his own, and the Métis, right to participate in deliberations upon the political future of the settlement. Highlighting the *reflective* capacity of Riel and other political actors offers an important corrective to the narrative of the Resistance as a military and violent act carried out by the disciplined buffalo hunters or a rowdy force of unemployed boatmen. The intellectual work was not just about speeches and newspapers, it often involved a public display, even spectacle, of public authority. Riel framed the public space from within the logic of settler *and* Indigenous politics. The son of a Métis miller and a graduate of a *collège classique*, Riel was the heir of epistemologies from both worlds and understood both the necessity for barricades on the Rivière Salé and refutations in the world of print.

Riel drew upon a constellation of iterations of the “public,” but he was reluctant to use “opinion” which he associated with disagreement. Jeffrey McNairn points out that the term “public opinion” meant something very different from today’s concept of an aggregate of opinions. Rather, he argues it was a collective entity, “the outcome of prolonged public

deliberation among diverse individuals listening to and participating in free, open, and reasoned exchange of information and argument.”<sup>4</sup> It was the “best” answer a community could provide, i.e. a truth. Louis Riel, who embraced the Catholic critique of universal reason as a dangerous Enlightenment dogma, was skeptical, if not outright hostile, to such an idea of “truth.” However, he also had to adopt the tactics of public opinion-makers. Like other political theorists, he worried about the chaos of “opinion,” but he was not so foolish as to try and stop it by force alone. Riel also had to contend with settler colonial ideas about race and civilization that attempted to disqualify Indigenous people from participating in rational public deliberation. His leadership thus offers an interesting opportunity to examine the proposal of an alternative to the settler colonial model, one balanced between settler and Indigenous political orders.

Riel was a unique individual, but his exceptional experience has broader relevance. He represents Métis agency in the face of what appeared to be a colossal unstoppable force, the settler colonial regime. The Métis were no “potatoes in a sack.” This was not the first time, nor even the second time the Métis had proven their autonomy in the face of imperial attempts to control them. The Indigenous peoples of the Northwest saw in Riel a resolution to what seemed an impossible situation. Riel had been to Montreal, he knew the potential of the “public sphere,” but he also knew and respected the power of kinship. In choosing to follow Riel, the Métis demonstrated their intentions with respect to the new political order, and, in a stinging rebuke to London and Ottawa, they emphatically refused to believe that they were a doomed civilization to be swept aside by a tide of white settlement.

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<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada 1791-1854* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 6-8. For a more full discussion of this point see J.A.W. Gunn, “‘Public Opinion’ in Modern Political Science,” in James Farr, John S. Dryzek, and Stephen T. Leonard, eds. *Political Science in History: Research Programs and Political Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 99-122.



### 3.1 Historiography

Analysis of the Resistance has tended to centre on practical, military action—the audacious daring of the Métis blockade and the execution of Thomas Scott, while downplaying Riel’s theoretical work. Louis Riel’s leadership is often portrayed as angry and petulant bullying, and the most prominent feature of past narratives is the military might of the Métis.<sup>5</sup> A hangover from the older historiography born of a bias towards the Settler monopoly of “legitimate” violence, depictions of physical force in the “Red River Resistance” continue to dominate historical explanations. Evoking physical force as explanation for the events, historians have dismissed the negotiations involved in the emerging public sphere. It is argued here that the negotiation and intellectual coordination of the community sheds light on the manner in which a community consensus was reached between the occupation of Fort Garry on 2 November 1869 and the election of a Legislative Assembly on 23 March 1870.

In his 1963 biography, George Stanley recognized the “astonishing evidence of the political understanding of Louis Riel and his half-breed associates” but concluded that it was devoid of philosophical abstraction.<sup>6</sup> Similarly W.S. Morton and Thomas Flanagan downplayed Riel’s intellectual capacities, by crediting the theoretical work of crafting a discourse of rights and nationhood to clergymen (Antonin-Alexandre Taché and George Dugas, respectively), but they raised important questions about the political-ideological context.<sup>7</sup> In general, however, analysis of Riel’s political thought has been too categorical. The following chapter shows the

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<sup>5</sup> Bumsted, describes Riel’s actions as “volatile and unpredictable,” *Trials and Tribulations*, 209. Flanagan sees Riel as proud and obstinate, *Louis “David” Riel Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 8. Flanagan is borrowing from Joseph Octave Mousseau’s book from 1887, which as I argued in the previous chapter, is problematic. See also Morton, *Manitoba*, 124.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 114.

<sup>7</sup> Morton, *Manitoba*, 102. Thomas Flanagan, “Political Theory of the Red River Resistance,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 11, no. 1 (March 1978): 153–64.

limitations of Thomas Flanagan's interpretation of Riel's intellectual sources as medieval and conservative, as well as of Maggie Siggins's revolutionary narrative. Riel's politics should not be narrowly defined as "republican," nor as "conservative," but rather, like any innovator, borrowing from multiple intellectual traditions. More recently, Ian Angus has argued that the *Declaration of the People of Rupert's Land and the Northwest* was an unprecedented "mixture of British traditional rights and American Enlightenment rights."<sup>8</sup>

While downplaying Riel's ability to negotiate, the quest for unity in the settlement has been a central problem for the historiography of Red River. In 1956 William Morton was the first to respond in depth to the Creighton tradition of seeing the resistance as an anarchic moment in Canada's manifest destiny. He used Begg's *Red River Journal* to argue that unity was a driving factor in the movement, which nonetheless remained unstable. In the 1970s, Fritz Pannekoek and John Foster added nuance to this story by showing the religious and ethnic tensions that created intellectual and social turmoil.<sup>9</sup> Irene Spry, in a closer examination of the internal politics, argued that the differences, and contests for power were better explained by class,<sup>10</sup> a point which Brian Gallagher re-iterated.<sup>11</sup> While those cleavages complicated politics, they were successfully navigated and accommodated by astute political agents in Red River.

Since the 1980s, descriptions of Métis unity and consensus have shifted away from studies of politics. The cultural and social analysis of Métis communities has been extremely

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<sup>8</sup> Ian Angus, *Identity and Justice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 46.

<sup>9</sup> Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance of 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Pub, 1991); John Foster, "Some Questions and Perspectives on the Problems of Métis Roots," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985): 73-91. Both finished their dissertations in 1973.

<sup>10</sup> Irene Spry, "The Métis and Mixed-Bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 95-118.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Gallagher, "A Re-Examination of Race, Class and Society in Red River," *Native Studies Review* 4, no. 1&2 (1988): 25-65.

fruitful.<sup>12</sup> Also, new studies of the region as a borderland have changed historical perspectives.<sup>13</sup>

The implications of these studies, which tend to show coherence and cohesion in the Métis community, invite a return to the study of political resistance.<sup>14</sup>

### 3.2 Framing the Red River Public Sphere

This analysis of the Red River public intentionally echoes the work of Jurgen Habermas' famous *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.<sup>15</sup> Habermas' work is a good place to begin because it provides important conceptual benchmarks and analysis that, despite the considerable historical difference, are usefully applied to this study. Habermas' work emerged in reaction to a concern with the shortcomings of democracy in 1960s Germany and the "occupation" of the public by the "unpropertied."<sup>16</sup> However, it was his effort to "historicize" the concept that has raised such interest and caused much debate among historians. The most important aspect of his work was to link the history of the "public" with social transformation.<sup>17</sup> As Geoff Ely has

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<sup>12</sup> Some of the most important work is Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); Brenda Macdougall and Carolyn Podruchny, "Scuttling along the Spider's Web: Mobility and Kinship in Métis Ethnogenesis," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 59–92; Diane Payment, *The Free People-Li Gens Libres: A History of the Métis Community of Batoche, Saskatchewan* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Darren O'Toole has raised this point in his analysis of the "organic republicanism" of Red River. Darren O'Toole, "The Red River Resistance: The Machiavellian Moment of the Red River Métis of Manitoba" (PhD thesis, University of Ottawa, 2010). While exposing the problem, O'Toole's study is too narrowly defined by the parameters of political theory for the complexity of thought found in Louis Riel.

<sup>15</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989). For a survey of the influence of Habermas's work and recent critiques see Nick Crossley and John M. Roberts, eds., *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); Christian Emden and David R. Midgley, eds., *Beyond Habermas: Democracy, Knowledge, and the Public Sphere* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Andrej Pinter, "Public Sphere and History: Historians' Response to Habermas on the 'Worth' of the Past," *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 28 no 217 (2004): 222. See also Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, "the occupation of the political public sphere by the unpropertied masses led to an interlocking of state and society which removed from the public sphere its former basis without supplying a new one," (179).

<sup>17</sup> As Nancy Fraser points out, Habermas allows us to see the links between social structure and the interrelationships between the private and public spheres. Nancy Fraser, "What's Critical about Critical Theory? The

demonstrated the term “public” and “public sphere” remain useful and applicable to historical study in the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

The public sphere refers to a space, conceptual or physical, which “mediates between state and society.” Famously, Habermas wrote about salons and coffeeshops where “the private people, come together to form a public.”<sup>19</sup> He was interested in how these spaces shaped communication and argued that in the eighteenth century a “bourgeois public sphere” emerged. In contrast to the “secretive” public sphere of the “Ancien Regime,” this bourgeois public sphere was founded on principles of Enlightenment rationality and offered “universal access.” Public politics also provided a bridge to a theory of morality because it empowered the weaker elements of society (“truth not authority makes law”).<sup>20</sup> For Habermas the public sphere of civil society stood or fell on the principle of universal access.<sup>21</sup>

While it is important to distinguish Riel’s actions and the events of Red River from the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere, Habermas’ analysis offers important lessons. First of all, in Red River the mediums of communication, and the forms of deliberation were far more diverse and complex than the print and coffeeshops examined by Habermas in his classic analysis. This is a common critique of Habermas’ idealized public sphere.<sup>22</sup> This is related to a similar critique of Habermas’s postulation of a “substantive rationality” in the public sphere. As Nicole Eustace points out, during the War of 1812, the public sphere was full of emotional

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Case of Habermas and Gender,” in *Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of Gender*, ed. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

<sup>18</sup> “Nations, Publics and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 25-31.

<sup>20</sup> Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 52-58. In this equation, “Interest” becomes “Reason” through public debate. See *Ibid*, 83.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Gardiner, “Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums: Habermas and Bakhtin on Dialogue, Everyday Life and the Public Sphere,” in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, ed. Jürgen Habermas, Nick Crossley, and John M. Roberts (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

persuasion.<sup>23</sup> In his youth, the public sphere of Montreal provided Riel with sufficient examples of the diverse displays of public persuasion, from emotional to physical violence, that were not monopolized by the official authorities.<sup>24</sup> Public claims-making in Red River, just like other publics around the world, was far more eclectic and heterogenous than can be gleaned from simply reading the newspapers. Yet, the authority of the new idiom “public” undoubtedly served Riel’s interest because, and this is perhaps the most pertinent aspect of Habermas’s analysis for this study, the terms and means of persuasion were increasingly liberated from traditional forms of authority, and invited social engagement in public affairs. The idea, fictive as it certainly was, of universal access was an important part of the legitimacy and consent that underpinned the new authority that was emerging in Red River. Finally, this new form of authority was performed as masculine.<sup>25</sup> In practice, this opposition of mind and body, reason and desire did not actually work in Red River where ideas of kinship ties and matrilineal family structure remained an important part of local governance. In fact, as historians have shown, women’s influence on the public sphere was never eliminated.<sup>26</sup> But the theoretical, or at least rhetorical, principle of a separation of spheres did become an increasingly important aspect of displaying political authority.

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<sup>23</sup> Eustache extends her critique more broadly to argue that “What we need is a model of print culture that blends Habermas’s emphasis on popular discord and debate, rather than consensus, with Anderson’s recognition of the centrality of emotion in the rise of national aggression.” Nicole Eustache, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 14.

<sup>24</sup> Horner, “Solemn Processions and Terrifying Violence: Spectacle, Authority, and Citizenship during the Lachine Canal Strike of 1843,” *Urban History Review/Revue d’histoire urbaine*, 38 (2010): 36–47. For a recent study of violence in the constitution of order in Montreal see Colin Grittner, “Privilege at the Polls: Culture, Citizenship, and the Electoral Franchise in Mid-Nineteenth-Century British North America,” (PhD Thesis, McGill University, Montreal, December 2015), 208-258.

<sup>25</sup> As feminist critic Iris Marion Young argues, a “separate spheres” artificially separated the mind and the body—and relegated women to the body, men to the mind. “Impartiality and the Civic Public: Some Implications of Feminist Critiques of Moral and Political Theory,” in *Feminism as Critique: On the Politics of Gender*, ed. Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 56–76.

<sup>26</sup> There is a host of literature on this topic, two classic examples are Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University, 1988), and Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cornell University Press, 1988).

The Red River public sphere was a site of cultural and cross-cultural meaning that, following Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers, can be called a “gathering place.”<sup>27</sup> This metaphor draws our attention to the fact that the archival record for public communication in Indigenous contexts is fragmentary and needs to be read differently. The historical record has not been fair in its recording of Indigenous public politics. As Germaine Warkentine argues for Pierre Radisson, “the two worlds between which Radisson moved were not those of ‘civilization’ and ‘wilderness,’ but between a set of social assumptions of great antiquity where Europeans and Native people met almost on common ground and a world which was being reconceived in terms of the hard factuality of market economics and empirical science.”<sup>28</sup> In the public sphere of Red River, Riel contested the meaning and proprietorship of “civility” itself. Legitimacy within this cross cultural context required a diverse skill set that is not easily described by the standard binary of “civilized” and “uncivilized.” A broader vision of political deliberation and communication, as offered by a framework of a “gathering place,” allows a more fruitful (and ethical!) analysis of Indigenous political decision-making and agency.

Traditional forms of authority, such as kinship, continued to exert their influence in the public sphere. Social, economic and political relationships were all mediated, according to the roles of “brother,” “sister,” “father,” “mother,” and “cousin,” as well as a host of other relations.<sup>29</sup> The frequent vocalization of these relationships in public spaces served as a reminder

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<sup>27</sup> Carolyn Podruchny, Frederic Gleach, and Roger Roulette, “Putting up Poles: Power, Navigation, and Cultural Mixing in the Fur Trade,” in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, ed. Laura L Peers and Carolyn Podruchny (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 16.

<sup>28</sup> “Discovering Radisson: A Renaissance Adventurer Between Two Worlds,” in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, ed. Jennifer Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996), 43–70.

<sup>29</sup> The literature here is extensive, for Métis historiography see the excellent introduction in Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, eds., *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012). Another excellent analysis of the importance of kinship in Indigenous governance is Robert Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and the Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013).

of obligation. They were also not static, and family events, such as marriage, interfered to shift the “many tender ties.” As shown in Chapter One, these ties defined Métis society; they also formed public opinion. An important iteration of the familial bond in the public sphere was the idiom of loyalty to the Crown. As Peter Cook, Sarah Carter, and others have argued, Indigenous peoples understood the relationship to the Crown through metaphors of family that did not match European patriarchal ideas.<sup>30</sup> While Indigenous peoples understood loyalty as a series of family ties which implied mutual obligation, from a colonial perspective it was often understood as a politico-legal relationship, and, increasingly, informed by a language of constitutional rights of subjects. This confusion often set the stage for disappointment, or more maliciously, for deception. However, the ambiguity was not always unhelpful, indeed the concept of “loyalism” provided an opening for Indigenous peoples to create consensus.<sup>31</sup> Both reformers and Indigenous nations claimed a direct relationship to the authority of the Crown over the heads of other intermediary institutions.

The key shift in the public sphere was the increasing authority of the idiom of the “public” in discourse. A host of idioms such as “public,” “public interest,” “public opinion,” were employed. The idea of, and recourse to, public opinion in Red River was a process of political invention, and was forged by political contests to meet particular needs.<sup>32</sup> It was initially evoked against despotism and tyranny by opponents of the HBC’s government: the Sayer Trial,

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Cook, “Onontio Gives Birth: How the French in Canada Became Fathers to Their Indigenous Allies, 1645–73,” *Canadian Historical Review* 96, no. 2 (June 2015): 165–93; Sarah Carter, ““Your Great Mother Across the Salt Sea”: Prairie First Nations, the British Monarchy and the Vice Regal Connection to 1900,” *Manitoba History* 48, (Autumn/Winter, 2004-5). URL: <http://www.mhs.mb.ca>.

<sup>31</sup> David Bell, and Norman Knowles have argued loyalism was not a coherent nor unified ideological tradition. Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). David G. Bell, *Early Loyalist Saint John: The Origins of New Brunswick Politics, 1783-1786* (Fredericton: New Ireland Press, 1983).

<sup>32</sup> Keith Michael Baker, “Public Opinion as Political Invention,” in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 168.



in which the Métis participated, was a key example. Later events such as the 1857 petition for crown colony status or the Corbett trial discussed in Chapter One did not have the same support from the Métis. Consequently, settlers, failing to convince the Métis that they could represent their interests, began to inflect their discourse with ideologies of race and civilization, to marginalize or at least to discount Indigenous opinions. For example, as was shown in Chapter One, the *Nor'wester* attempted to humiliate Jean-Louis Riel. Thus “public opinion” became a technique of settler colonialism, or “cultural technology,” to displace and erase the Indigenous public.<sup>33</sup> As this differentiation became part of an effort to dispossess them of their land, “public opinion” was received with scepticism if not outright hostility by traditional forms of authority. Riel saw their point, however, because he was also well versed in the diverse idioms and culture of the public sphere in Quebec, Riel was uniquely situated to manage it. Drawing on both settler and Indigenous worlds, he was able to unite the forces of Resistance against Canadian annexation. Meanwhile, the agents of the Canadian state, ignorant and disconnected from local practice and political forms, failed.

To reveal multiple ways of knowing, one must consult multiple sources. The bulk of this chapter relies upon Riel’s own writings which can be found in the *Collected Works of Louis Riel*. These sources have been closely studied by previous historians, but new understandings and interpretations of these texts are necessary when considering them in light of the public sphere. In addition, this chapter relies upon newspapers, reports of meetings, government council reports, and private letters to illustrate the importance of public opinion in Red River. The insurgency of 1869 was chronicled by a highly literate and historically self-conscious group of

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<sup>33</sup> Jody Berland, *North of Empire: Essays on the Cultural Technologies of Space* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 11–14.



residents.<sup>34</sup> Joseph James Hargrave, an HBC employee, has left a remarkable consideration and analysis of public opinion in his book *Red River* and his articles in the *Montreal Herald*. Bumsted considered him “one of the unacknowledged fore-runners of modern Canadian social history”<sup>35</sup> because of his interest in gossip and scandal. Alexander Begg’s *Red River Journal 1869-1870* provides a detailed description of the internal changes in the political alliances in the settlement, and the efforts to find local unity while resisting the agenda of the Canadian party.<sup>36</sup> Local and Canadian newspapers, particularly the *Nor’wester*, the *Globe* and *Le Nouveau Monde*, provide informative illustrations of the political interests and public voices at the time. Other written documents consulted include the memoirs of George Winship, Louis Schmidt, and Willie Traill. The *Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Red River Disturbance* as well as the private correspondence of clerics such as Norbert Richtot and Archbishop Alexander-Antonin Taché were also used. In Red River, the public interest was shaped not only in the newsprint and coffeeshops, but rowdy public meetings took place on church steps, in the presbytery, at horse races, flag parades as well as family homes. Flags, clothing and other “non-written” forms of communication were far more significant to Indigenous power and authority, a fact which Riel was very conscious of.<sup>37</sup> In order to give apposite weight to these voices and their

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<sup>34</sup> According to historian J.M. Bumsted “Red River harboured one of Canada’s most lively and best-educated intellectual communities.” “Reporting the Resistance of 1869–1870,” in *Thomas Scott’s Body: And Other Essays on Early Manitoba History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000), 179–96.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Hargrave, *Red River* (Montreal: Lovell, 1871); J. M. Bumsted, “Introduction,” in *Reporting the Resistance: Alexander Begg and Joseph Hargrave on the Red River Resistance* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2003), 18.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Begg, *Alexander Begg’s Red River Journal and Other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869-70*, ed. William Morton (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1956); Alexander Begg and Joseph James Hargrave, *Reporting the Resistance: Alexander Begg and Joseph Hargrave on the Red River Resistance*, ed. J. M. Bumsted (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2003).

<sup>37</sup> For an extended critique of a bias toward printed and textual documents see Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender Representation and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

political valence for Indigenous politics,<sup>38</sup> this chapter attempts to read “beyond the words” of Dakota war councils, begging dances, community rumours, and horse races.<sup>39</sup> The overlap between the textual and the non-textual, the ideological and the material, the official, and the unofficial was necessary for the process of constructing *reasons* for consent.

### 3.3 The growing influence of public opinion

By 1870 “public opinion” had emerged as a key discursive device contesting the political culture of Red River. It started gradually, but some noted the change. Alexander Ross blamed it on the Sayer trial of 1849. According to his explanation in 1856, “In this struggle, legality in a certain degree, carried the day; but in such a way, that public opinion was left as dissatisfied on the point as before and the law as vague as before.”<sup>40</sup> For Ross, the Métis were a private interest masquerading as a public authority: “these deluded people have been incited and worked upon by disaffected demagogues.”<sup>41</sup> The petitions for Crown colony status by Métis and other Red River settlers in 1857 also drew upon the authority of the “public,” but these challenges to the HBC authority also drew upon Indigenous ideas of a “Free-people,” *otipemisiwak*, who

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<sup>38</sup> Jim Miller has challenged historians to reflect upon Native peoples involvement in politics through their cultural identities and historical realities and value systems. *SkyScrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). Recent work by scholars has illustrated the value of his suggestion see for example the Deember Issue of the 2015 *Journal of Canadian History*, vol 50, no. 3. For a good overview of the way in which “Indian games” have political valence see Allan Downey and Susan Neylan, “Raven Plays Ball: Situating “Indian Sports Days” within Indigenous and Colonial Spaces in Twentieth-Century Coastal British Columbia,” (442-468). As the authors argue Indian Sports Days could be a site for assimilation and resistance. Revisiting history through Indigenous perspectives, especially spiritual and cultural, has transformative potential for our understanding of political engagement as James Carson has argued in his study of the life of Canada’s first martyr. “Brébeuf Was Never Martyred: Reimagining the Life and Death of Canada’s First Saint,” *Canadian Historical Review* 97, no. 2 (March 2016): 222-243.

<sup>39</sup> Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* 25, no. 26 (1990): 56–80; Michael Gardiner, “Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums: Habermas and Bakhtin on Dialogue, Everyday Life and the Public Sphere,” in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, ed. Jürgen Habermas, Nick Crossley, and John M. Roberts (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1856), 372-386.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

demanded rights and recognition as people of the land. British subjects seeking to end what they saw as feudal controls of capital were beginning to invoke public opinion in defence of their rights. The arrival of a printing press for the *Nor'wester* in 1859 is a fitting benchmark for the transformation of the public sphere, and the Corbett case (discussed in Chapter One) illustrated the weakness of the Company's authority in this new context.

From its beginning, the ambition of the *Nor'wester* was to "hasten the change" of commerce and industry and to "cultivate a healthy public sentiment." The founders, William Coldwell and William Buckingham, were shortly joined by James Ross, a vocal critic of the Company, as editor.<sup>42</sup> They saw it as a vehicle for the "wants, opinions and interests of Red River settlement."<sup>43</sup> For a decade, from 1859-69, the *Nor'wester* was full of reports of dissatisfaction regarding the trampling upon British rights by the Company. The *Nor'wester* provided a history of the "chronic dissatisfaction" of the "people" and praised the "reformers" of the 1850s, including French-Métis such as Jean-Louis Riel. However, by the end of the decade, unable to reconcile itself with the Catholic party, the newspaper had thrown its support behind a party locally known as the "Canadas."<sup>44</sup> In 1865, it was bought by the Canadian annexationist John Christian Schultz who used it to attack the tyranny of Company rule.<sup>45</sup> In 1869, the journal justified itself, by stating "We are conscious that the views of this Journal do not meet with the approbation of all parties in this settlement...We are in opposition to the system of government...we believe this territory belongs to Canada, her just right."<sup>46</sup> It was proud to be a standard bearer of dissenting and provocative views: "Whatever views we advance--, even

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<sup>42</sup> Bruce Peel, *Early Printing in the Red River Settlement 1859-1870* (Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1974).

<sup>43</sup> "Prospectus," *Nor'wester*, 22 August 1859, 1.

<sup>44</sup> "Threatening Anarchy and Rebellion: What is to be done?" *Nor'wester*, 20 June 1863, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Peel, *Early Printing in the Red River Settlement 1859-1870*. Schultz sold the paper again in 1868 to Walter Down.

<sup>46</sup> "Misrepresentation," *Nor'wester*, 19 February 1869, 1.

should they prove erroneous,--they have at least this merit;--they are boldly advanced, not sneakingly;--they are set forth so that all the world may see them.”<sup>47</sup> This confrontational manner, and overtly colonialist programme, alienated large numbers of individuals and groups, but the influence of the newspaper on the public was undeniable.

Though derogatory and racist, the *Nor’wester* was correct to point out that the HBC government could no longer assure public order. Part of the problem was the lack of transparency. Even government supporters recognized this. As James Hargrave wrote, in a critique Habermas would recognize,

The council sits with closed doors, and the public is not admitted to hear its deliberations. These circumstances, along with the fact that the four per cent duty [is] levied, has given rise to a good deal of misunderstanding. It has been represented to the public by certain parties, that the secret nature of the deliberations favours the ‘star Chamber’ while ‘taxation without representation’ is essentially un-English.<sup>48</sup>

Other interests moved to counter the bigotry of the free press, particularly when it was associated with Canadian annexation. The reaction to the article published in the *Toronto Globe* on 4 January 1869 by Charles Mair, a recent arrival and “Canada Firster,” which outlined his views on the Red River settlement serves as an illustration.<sup>49</sup> While praising the fertility of the land, Mair painted a very negative portrait of the people living in the settlement, particularly the “halfbreeds” and the women. Joseph Hargrave recorded the scene when an angry crowd confronted him at Mr. Bannatyne’s store: “The female part of the population got very angry. One lady pulled the poet’s nose, while another used her fingers rudely about his ears. A third, confining herself to words, said his letters would be productive of serious mischief by circulating

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> “Red River Settlement” *Montreal Herald*, 4 November 1869, in Begg and Hargrave, *Reporting the Resistance*, 60.

<sup>49</sup> Charles Mair’s private letter from November was published in the *Toronto Globe* on 4 January 1869, see page one.

doubts about the reality of the destitution [in the settlement].”<sup>50</sup> According to Hargrave, these actions had a desirable effect, “I am happy to be able to record that, since the arrival of the objectionable series, a long letter from the pen of Mr. Mair, has appeared in the ‘Globe’ which, as it was expressly written for publication, forms a strong contrast to the others, and has recommended itself to a critical Prairie public as being, on the whole, a very creditable effort.”<sup>51</sup>

This cycle, where Canadian annexationists criticized the government and then locals criticized the Canadians, led inevitably to a spiral into freedom of expression. More and more voices were coming into the public sphere in response to the slanders of the paper, even if they claimed that they ought not to have the right to judge. Inhabitants, like the women above, felt it their duty and right to participate in the public sphere, even if only to check the upstart Canadians. If Hargrave was only hesitantly optimistic about the capacity for this “critical Prairie public” to exercise good judgement and reform the ignorance of newcomers, others were more forthcoming. In a letter to the *Globe*, Alexander Begg encouraged “free thinking, free speaking, and free acting Canadians” to inform themselves about the settlement.<sup>52</sup> But, he also warned, “Let the public of Canada beware” that they too had an obligation to enlighten the Red River public. “We are at this present day utterly ignorant of what is proposed for us.” Public meetings representing Canadian interests had been “miserable failures,” so much “that Annexation to Canada became a by word of ridicule. The meetings were scenes of uproarious merriment instead of sober, orderly gatherings for the public weal.” He pointed out sarcastically, “the *prestige* of the men who have figured so far in connection with the Canadian Government here has tended to make it dreadfully unpopular with the majority.” He blamed the Canadians for

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<sup>50</sup> Joseph Hargrave, *Red River* (Montreal: Lovell, 1871), 456.

<sup>51</sup> Hargrave, *Red River*, 458.

<sup>52</sup> Alexander Begg, “10 November 1869,” *The Globe in Reporting the Resistance*, 78–91. It appeared in the *Toronto Globe* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December.

attempting to keep the colony in the dark, “We must judge from the government men we have come in contact with—and certainly the specimens produced so far in this case have not redounded to the credit of Canada.”<sup>53</sup>

Begg’s public sphere was strongly influenced by the eighteenth-century precedents that Habermas was interested in.<sup>54</sup> He suggested it was the obligation of every British subject to promote the right of his fellows to judge for themselves:

Will the people of Canada stand by and see a community of free British subjects there ignored? I cannot believe it. There is one thing is for sure. The settlement generally will not submit to their Councilmen being elected from abroad. Every honest freedom-loving Canadian will, I am sure join me in saying that the people of this country deserve their rights, and the greatest right of a free people is a voice in the government of their own country. The people here, I am sure will fight to the end to give this point a thorough representation at the council board, and there is no use for the Government at Ottawa to coerce them into anything else.<sup>55</sup>

He had an ominous warning about the possibility of force: “Extermination on the one side or the other would follow; the Indians, heretofore tractable, would be roused, their worst passions inflamed, rapine and massacre would be the result, ... if it is attempted to coerce the Settlement by force.”<sup>56</sup>

Like newspapers, public meetings were a manifestation of the worthiness of public opinion and inevitably justified freedom of expression, even for those who decried their authority.<sup>57</sup> By the end of the 1860s, there was a consensus: to maintain order it would be necessary to oppose the champions of freedom of expression on their own ground. On 29 July, a

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> For an example of the challenges to apply Habermas eighteenth century analysis to the nineteenth century see Geoff Ely, “Nations, Publics and Political Cultures.”

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> On a slightly different level, Jeffrey McNairn makes this argument for Metcalfe Crisis in 1840s Upper Canada: “There was nothing illogical in appealing to the local public to convince it that it was not the appropriate judge.” McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge*, 223.

public meeting at Fort Garry was held to discuss the “affairs of the settlement.”<sup>58</sup> Writing to Bishop Taché, George Dugas reported his own worries and those of “les gens de bons sens” that things had come so far. For Dease as well as multiple others in the Catholic Church, this was a result of an increasingly aggressive liberal press.<sup>59</sup> He was shocked to report that councillor William Dease proposed that the payout to the HBC should be demanded by the settlers for themselves, and, according to Dugas, to “renverser le gouvernement.”

Les Métis en grand nombre étaient rendus de tous les points de la colonie sans savoir au juste pourquoi on les appelait. Monsieur Dease avait en soin d’écrire dimanche dernier une invitation qui a été lu après la messe devant toutes les églises. Les principaux à la tête de ce mouvement étaient Dease, Hallet, et Jos Genton. On a aussi mis le nom de Pas. Breland mais sans son consentement.

Il va sans dire qu’aucune forme légale n’a été observé dans cette assemblée. Chacun y parlait à son inspiration.<sup>60</sup>

The free expression of ideas (*son inspiration*) was for Dugas a sign of the breakdown of public order (*aucune forme légale*). The ignorance (*sans savoir au juste pourquoi on les appelait* and *sans son consentement*) reinforced the dangers of such gatherings. But Dugas had carefully planted his own speaker in the crowd,

Johny Bruce alors a pris la parole, [“]Monsieur Dease[,]” dit-il [“]je trouve fort étonnant qu’un homme de votre position vienne proposer à notre population de semblables choses. Vous êtes magistrat et conseiller vous avez serment de fidélité au gouvernement actuel, vous devriez être le premier a le défendre et aujourd’hui, au lieu de le faire, vous cherchez, malgré votre conscience, a nous pousser [...] une révolte contre ce gouvernement auquel nous devons obéir. Pour moi je m’oppose au tant que je le puis a de pareilles[?] menées.”<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> “Notice,” *Nor’wester*, 24 July 1869, 2.

<sup>59</sup> Between 1860 and 1870 more than a dozen journals were created in Quebec to deal what Bourget identified as the main threat to Quebec society. Gérard Bouchard, “Apogée et déclin de l’idéologie Ultramontaine à Travers Le Journal Le Nouveau Monde, 1867-1900,” in *Idéologies au Canada Français 1850-1900* (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1971), 117–47. For a discussion of the liberal movement, particularly the Institut Canadien see Yvan Lamonde, *Gens de parole: Conférences publiques, essais et débats à l’Institut canadien de Montréal, 1845-1871* (Montréal: Boréal, 1990).

<sup>60</sup> “George Dugas to A.A. Taché, 29 July 1869,” #6607-10 Taché correspondence, SHSB.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* Dugas noted to Taché “Vous comprenez qu’on lui avait fait la leçon d’avance mais n’importe il s’en est bien acquitté.”

Bruce would become the first president of the Métis National Committee. There is almost no other record of Bruce's voice in the Resistance, and he is often seen as a mere figurehead used by others for their purposes. Bumsted points out that his contemporaries saw him as "a man of sound judgment within a limited sphere."<sup>62</sup> Employed as a carpenter by A.G. Bannatyne and the head of a family with a small lot in St. Boniface, his voice and mere presence would have been a source of stability, but he could not speak with the sophistication that Riel would.<sup>63</sup>

Bruce's opposition to Dease also indicates the predicament of the clergy in maintaining the public order against the corrosive influence of "opinion." Historian Frits Pannekoek was undoubtedly correct that the clerics played a role in the conflict.<sup>64</sup> However, Pannekoek's emphasis upon the role of the clergy in introducing ideas of social exclusion is perhaps overstated. In their own words they were more interested in unity. For both Anglican and Catholic clerics of Red River, free expression of opinion was a great threat to the public order. Denominational differences are also relevant. Anglicans tended to be indignant at these attacks upon constituted authority. The Methodist church tended to support freedom of expression. But the Presbyterians represented by John Black followed a moderate course. The Catholics, meanwhile, encouraged Bruce because of the moderating influence he exerted on the expressions of opinion. Some clerics, like Noel Ritchot, George Dugas, Joachim Allard, and Raymond Giroux, all from Canada, were more pragmatic and would later support Riel in his efforts to

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<sup>62</sup> J. M Bumsted, *Louis Riel v. Canada*, 26.

<sup>63</sup> Allan Ronaghan challenges the idea that Bruce was merely a figure-head. Bruce was later deemed a "turncoat and traitor" by the Métis for giving testimony against Ambroise Lepine in 1874. "John Bruce," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (University of Toronto/Université Laval) <http://www.biographi.ca>.

<sup>64</sup> At the same time Pannekoek overstates their unity and their influence. His assessment of the Métis reminds one of Marx's potatoes in a sack, "Halfbreed, uncertain of whether they owed their principal allegiance to their race, their religion, their kinfolk, or their Company heritage, were open to persuasion that it was their religion, by any factious clergyman or demagogue who wished to use them..." Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*, 141.



intervene in the public. Others, particularly those Oblates from France were less supportive.<sup>65</sup> It may be that the Canadian born Catholics chose to remain with their flock as spiritual advisors, hoping to moderate and guide developments as best they could, or they could have been more alert to the dangers posed by the English bias of this new “public opinion”.

In sum, with respect to public opinion, the clergy, generally supportive of the HBC since the government reforms, was in a predicament. By engaging in the public sphere, through a man like John Bruce, they were indirectly reinforcing the idea that individuals had the right to judge the government in the public sphere. Nonetheless, judging from his letter to Taché, Dugas thought it was necessary, because otherwise Dease might have swayed the minds of others. It was even more pertinent because, according to Ritchot, Dease was just a frontman, and the real source of the agitation was John Christian Schultz, the head of the “Canadas” party.<sup>66</sup>

Critics might object to the motivations of those trying to determine public policy, but it was now impossible to reject the authority of such public meetings themselves. Attempts to block opinion published by the Canadians were, like most rearguard actions, comparable to plugging holes in a leaky dike where the water was rising. What was needed was a new channel. Other opinions, tangential to those expressed in the public meeting of 29 July, but more carefully expressed and with greater sensitivity to the complexities and overlapping of multiple publics, would be more effective.

The “prairie public,” to the surprise and chagrin of the Canadian annexationist party (and perhaps even to itself) was, to borrow the words of Jeffery McNairn, “capable of judging” and

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<sup>65</sup> William Morton, *Begg's Red River Journal and Other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869-70* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1956), 50–52. G.F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1963), 57–58. It is possible that this division emerged between French Canadian and French European clerics. This was a tension that Taché had to deal with frequently. Raymond Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface the “Good Fight” and the Illusive Vision* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003).

<sup>66</sup> “Deposition of Reverend Noel Joseph Ritchot,” Select Committee on the Causes of Difficulties in the North-West Territory in 1869-70 (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1874), 68.

organized strong resistance in the public sphere.<sup>67</sup> The increasing influence of newsprint and public meetings in Red River were proof of an increasingly complex public sphere. Riel's advantage was that, having studied in Canada, he understood the world of the annexationists and the role of opinion, but, as a "son of the country," he also understood the Métis public sphere. From this position, between both worlds, he was able to fashion a new space in the "clash of civilizations" that gathered together the Canadian and Métis forms of authority as the basis for a new state. More abstractly, he could weave together Indigenous and colonial political cultures into a new narrative. This fabric, although at times deeply strained, provided a means of keeping the settlement united and preserved it from outside dominance.

### **3.4 Occupying the public sphere**

On 2 February 1869, Riel responded to Mair's letter in *Le Nouveau Monde*, a newspaper in Quebec.<sup>68</sup> Riel characterized Mair as a ship's captain who, in sailing along a coast, notes in his journal "les habitants de ce pays nous ont paru assez traitable." He objected to Mair's ignorance and the temerity of his falsehoods: "*je suis métis moi et je dis qu'il n'y a rien de plus faux que ces paroles.*"<sup>69</sup> Both were young men, Mair would have been 30 and Riel was only 25, but Riel's ironic sarcasm demonstrated his maturity in contrast to the bumbling Mair. In publishing his words in a Canadian newspaper, Riel acknowledged the need to occupy the "public," to speak to a Canadian audience, and make it a Métis space, or at least a space that would recognize Métis interests and rights. The Indigenous public sphere evolved in response to specific historical

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<sup>67</sup> In Upper Canada McNairn argues that the Metcalfe crisis shows the failure of "containment" and the need to mobilize the electorate caused conservatives to participate in public debate. McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge*, 237–38.

<sup>68</sup> Louis Riel, "Lettre à Monsieur le rédacteur," doc. #1-010 in *CWLR* 1: 13–15.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

crises, but from the beginning Riel knew that the position of the Métis had to be sustained by occupying the spaces of authority of the colonists as well.

At the same time as he acknowledged the authority of print medium, Riel also spoke from a position of power with respect to Indigenous sources of authority. The problem with Mair's letter, as Riel accurately pointed out, was his lack of position on the territory, which according to Indigenous epistemologies implied a lack of knowledge. Authority to speak was derived from knowing the land, which meant that he could not represent the people: "Vous parlez bien d'autres choses que vous n'avez pas eu le temps de voir ni de connaître; ça vaudrait bien autant que le reste de votre lettre; tout autant que les termes peu courtois, et je dirai même peu civilisés, dont vous vous servez en parlant des dames du pays, qui certes sous tous les rapports, valent bien les dames de votre pays."<sup>70</sup> Riel claimed that Métis women were as worthy as the women of Mair's country. It was a powerful claim designed to confront head on ideas about miscegenation or other racial differentiation that might appeal to settler colonists. The claim was so important because Indigenous women justified Métis territorial claims.

The terms of civility and courtesy (*terms peu courtois, et je dirai même peu civilisés*), and, by extension, civilization itself, were measured according to the way one spoke of women. It was a powerful argument that would resonate in both Métis and Canadian publics. Riel turned the tables by exposing Mair's lack of civility, and made Mair ignorant (*vous parlez... [des] choses que vous n'avez pas eu le temps de voir ni de connaître*). This was not the first time Riel confronted the idea of civilization head on. It was a strategy similar to the one he used in the debate at the college on the influence of the arts and sciences. Nor would it be the last, this strategy of "turning the tables" or *peritrope* was one that he would use over and over again, even

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

in his defence speech in 1885.<sup>71</sup>

It is worth pausing here to note the rhetorical similarities between the 1864 discourse and the 1869 letter. For instance, consider the opening of the 1864 discourse. The moderator of the debate begins by explaining that there was no intention to discuss such a question before such a distinguished audience but, “Mais un élève de Rhétorique Mr. Octave Jannel ayant étudié la question en particulier embrassa la cause de l’ignorance et nous provoqua à une discussion publique et aussi solennelle que possible; tant il était assuré de la victoire.”<sup>72</sup> In a similar fashion Riel concludes his 1869 letter to Mair by saying that, the Métis would never rise to such foolishness (*je n’aurais pas relevé les mensonges de cette lettre*), because they are so used to such treatment by strangers, but after the generous aide received from Canada last year, “j’ai cru qu’il était de mon devoir de protéger [la charité publique] contre des mensonges.” Another important comparison can be drawn from the powerful self-declaration, “Je suis métis moi.” As William Morton has pointed out despite a tradition which reveled in the racist trivia that Riel was “only” one-eighth Indian by blood, “this defiant identification of the writer with his people is the authentic note of Riel’s later career. He was the champion of his people; his mission was to ensure their survival.”<sup>73</sup> This was not a claim that he was willing or able to make openly at the college graduation ceremony, but here it shows a growing confidence in the assertion that the Métis were civilized.

In late summer of 1869, Louis Riel returned to the settlement and made an alliance with John Bruce.<sup>74</sup> Not all of the Métis agreed with Riel’s ideas, but this alliance was an important

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<sup>71</sup> Christopher Tindale, “The Use and Force of Rhetorical Strategies in Riel’s First Speech,” in *Riel’s Defence: Perspectives on His Speeches*, ed. Hans V Hansen (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press, 2014).

<sup>72</sup> “Plaidoyer sur l’influence des sciences et arts sur la société,” I2: 6.3.3-3 6/6, APSSM.

<sup>73</sup> Morton, *Begg’s Red River Journal*, 36.

<sup>74</sup> Riel’s autobiographical notes state: “Began the movement of 69 on the fifteenth day of August that year. Was elected secretary of the Halfbreed national committee about the middle of Sept. following.” Riel, “Autobiographical Notes,” doc. #3-148 in *CWLR*, 1985, 3: 260.

first step. Bruce, who must have known his father, gave Riel considerable legitimacy with the older generation. Also, Bruce's association with men dependent upon wage labour was a key source of Riel's military muscle.<sup>75</sup> Bruce would resign from the presidency on 27 December citing illness and, it is possible, because he found Riel's leadership too radical. Riel was evidently the more active of the pair, and his presence at public venues was frequently recorded. However, Bruce ought not to be dismissed due to the lack of a written record, rather it is necessary to recognize that his influence remains an unknown quantity. Between the two of them they gathered a small group of people who would be at the core of the movement.

While it is customary to speak of the "Riel resistance" it is important to remember that many of the most respected and well-established Métis refused to accept Riel's leadership. William Dease continued to represent a threat to the unity of the Métis, at one point even firing a gun at Bruce when the latter attempted to "arrest" him. Others, like Charles Nolin and Pierre Lavallier, also challenged Riel's leadership. In the name of kinship ties, Riel attempted to reconcile the differences between Métis, but not always with success. In a letter written in April 1871, he wrote to Charles Nolin: "Ce qui m'a le plus touché dans ta lettre c'est la noble demande que tu me fais: Celle de nous regarder de la même façon qu'avant les troubles. Oui! Assurément je le veux de tout mon coeur. Soyons deux bons amis comme nous sommes parents."<sup>76</sup> In Riel's vision, the Métis nation would continue to be united through their relationship to each other as cousins, reflecting the enduring power of Indigenous notions of extended kinship.

When Bruce and Riel summoned a Métis council, it was acknowledged if not outright supported by Noel Ritchot. The meetings were held in his presbytery in St. Norbert, just south of

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<sup>75</sup> Morton, *Begg's Red River Journal*, 51–52. This assessment is based upon secondary sources, there has not yet been a thorough study of the class component of the first recruits.

<sup>76</sup> "Lettre à Charles Nolin, 17 April 1871," doc. #1-090 in Riel, *CWLR*, 138.

Fort Garry. The council was composed of two representatives from each parish. Situated along the road between the American border and Red River, they were well positioned to block the access of the Canadian governor to the settlement. At its first assembly the council also drew up a list of resolutions to present to the Canadian government. There is no record this council published the list in the settlement, but it was included in a public letter in the *Courrier du Sainte Hyacinthe* on 6 October.<sup>77</sup> While Stanley and other biographers have quoted this letter none of them have considered how it, as the result of a Métis public meeting, illustrates deliberation, nor how remarkable it was that it appeared in a Quebec newspaper signed “deux habitants métis canadiens de la Rivière-Rouge.”<sup>78</sup> Publication was enabled by a past correspondent for the *Courrier*, Louis-Raymond Giroux. Giroux was now a priest in the settlement, but was also a former student of the *Collège de Montréal*, and had attended it while Riel was there.<sup>79</sup> The letter echoed many of Begg’s arguments that the public in Canada was ignorant of the settlement and its people: “Plusieurs journaux du Haut et du Bas-Canada ont librement émis leur opinion ... ne serait-il[le peuple Canadien] pas content de savoir ce que le peuple de la Rivière Rouge pense lui même de tout cela[?]”<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, the settlement itself was being kept in the dark with respect to the plans of the Canadian government. According to the letter, sending a governor who would form a council composed of members from outside of the country was doomed to failure as the inhabitants would not respect its decisions. The letter went further and stated a Métis programme. Namely, 1) they were loyal to the English Queen; 2) they recognized the HBC government; 3) they objected to the work being done by Canadian agents; 4) they were willing to

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<sup>77</sup> Louis Riel, “Lettre à Monsieur le Rédacteur, 6 October 1869,” doc. #1-090, in *CWLR*, 18–21. Signed “deux habitants métis canadiens de la Rivière-Rouge,” there is little doubt that this was the work of Riel and Bruce.

<sup>78</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 65. It is quoted without any effort to provide context or provenance.

<sup>79</sup> Giroux attended the college from 1856-1863. He was a member of the Académie française with Riel and both of their signatures are on the “règlements” of the Academy for 1863. “Constitutions de l’Académie du Collège de Montréal,” P1:11.3-114, APSSM.

<sup>80</sup> Riel, “Lettre à Monsieur le Rédacteur, 6 October 1869,” 18.

accept that the HBC was withdrawing from the country; and 5) they demanded that their rights like any other English colony be respected.<sup>81</sup>

The article was backed up by action on the ground. On 10 October, a group of Métis summoned by Riel's cousin Andre Nault stood on the surveyor's chain blocking further work. While Bumsted continues to insist upon describing Riel's actions as improvisational performances, such social theatre was not a spontaneous reaction.<sup>82</sup> As Stanley and Morton pointed out, the Métis knew what they were doing and their actions were carefully premeditated.<sup>83</sup> Over the next few days barricades manned by Métis were thrown up along the road, and armed patrols of the road and the town of Winnipeg were established. On 3 November, the Métis, led by Riel, seized Fort Garry. These displays of military force were symbolically potent and proved decisive in attracting supporters. Years later, Riel recalled the success of his efforts in uniting the Métis strength: "Started with eleven men on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 69 to meet Hon. W. McDougall. Took Fort Garry on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November with 120 men."<sup>84</sup> Riel continued to work at consolidating his position in the public sphere, and political observers were beginning to take notice. Hargrave wrote, "His name is Riel; he has been educated in Lower Canada, and is highly respected among his own people here."<sup>85</sup> Further weight was given to Riel's "own opinions...[which] may be inferred from the tenor of a speech made by him on Sunday."<sup>86</sup> Addressing the Métis from the steps of the Cathedral as his father had done in 1849, Riel stated, according to Hargrave, "... by all means Mr. Macdougall should enter,"<sup>87</sup> but not if their "political rights" would be trampled upon. Hargrave further observed, "Once roused he had little

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> See Bumsted, *Louis Riel v. Canada*, 54.

<sup>83</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 59; Morton, *Begg's Red River Journal*, 46-47.

<sup>84</sup> Riel, "Autobiographical Notes," 260.

<sup>85</sup> Hargrave, "30 October 1869," *Montreal Herald*, 24 November 1869, in *Reporting the Resistance*, 76.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

fear of[for?] them, and he urged that should any one fall, a handkerchief should be dipped in his blood and used in all future engagements as their national flag.” According to Hargrave, Riel urged them make a stand. “Their opposition to impending changes must begin somewhere, and it had been determined to commence it by opposing the entrance of the future Governor.” Finally, Hargrave noted the success of these public statements in uniting the Métis: “Riel’s men have steadily increased in number throughout the week, and now amount to several hundreds.”<sup>88</sup> The declaration of a programme, formulated and published through the mediums of print and social theatre won supporters to Riel’s cause.<sup>89</sup> While biographers usually dismiss the church scene as demagoguery, such a term fails to account for the weeks and weeks of preparation (according to his notes he started the campaign on August 15) required to convince hundreds of people from spread out settlements of the worthiness and timeliness of the cause, much less to organize some manner of supporting them and their families while they were away from their homes.<sup>90</sup>

The Council of Assiniboia, attempting to reassert its authority as the proper forum for public deliberation, invited Riel to explain his actions the next day at an extraordinary meeting. After listening to Riel’s explanations, the Council advised him about the illegality of his actions. Such preaching must have seemed like nonsense to Riel when the Council of Assiniboia was less and less capable defending the public interest. Inaction only left the Métis more vulnerable. And, as he pointed out, without a proper public voice, they were lost. The Métis would not be backed into a corner.

[Riel said] they were uneducated and only half civilized and felt that if a large immigration were to take place they would probably be crowded out of a country which they claimed as their own; that they knew they were in a sense poor and insignificant, but, that it was just because they were aware of this, that they had

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> It was no easy matter to keep his guards who also had to attend to other duties. Already on 12 December, Begg reported that Riel called for a fresh guard to relieve those at Fort Garry. Morton, *Begg’s Red River Journal*, 226–27.

<sup>90</sup> Riel, “Autobiographical Notes,” 260.



felt so much at being treated as if they were even more insignificant than they in reality were.<sup>91</sup>

Bumsted described the speech as rambling and irregular, and other biographers have not considered that here in the Council room Riel was attempting to redefine the terms of engagement in the public.<sup>92</sup> They might be a “poor, insignificant people,” which was certainly a trope, but they were “aware.” This awareness heightened the sense of being treated as insignificant. Riel’s point was that public order depended upon recognition, even an “uneducated,” “half civilized” people deserved to have their say. And if the council could not speak for them then they must speak for themselves.

All was duly recorded in the Council minutes;<sup>93</sup> however, as Hargrave noted, “The secrecy with which the debates of our local council are surrounded has of course prevented any reliable report of what occurred being published.”<sup>94</sup> Through his direct actions in the public sphere, Riel’s influence now outstripped that of the Company. Riel claimed his legitimacy before the tribunal of the Red River public.

### **3.5 “To form one body”: Public Opinion and Public Order**

Hargrave summed up the state of the public opinion in early November, by stating “The minds of men are of course in an excited state... At the present moment we may regard local public opinion as being under three divisions. These are the French half-breed insurgents; the whole remaining resident population possessed of property in the Settlement; and thirdly the Canadian

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<sup>91</sup> From his speech given to the Council of Assiniboia. “Minutes of a meeting of the Governor and Council of Assiniboia, 25 October 1869,” in E.H. Oliver, ed., *The Canadian North-West and Its Early Development and Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council of the Red River Colony and the Northern Department of Rupert’s Land* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914), 616.

<sup>92</sup> Bumsted, *Louis Riel v. Canada*, 29.

<sup>93</sup> “Minutes of a meeting of the Governor and Council of Assiniboia, 25 October 1869,” in Oliver, *Legislative Records: Minutes of the Council*, 616.

<sup>94</sup> Hargrave, “30 October 1869,” 76.

new arrivals of the past summer.”<sup>95</sup> This was slightly oversimplified, as Americans were increasingly seen by reporters like Begg to be influencing the actions of the Métis and there was significant division within the French Métis against Riel’s leadership. Furthermore, while both Hargrave and Begg might be unaware of their import, the interests of Cree, Dakota and Saulteaux Peoples continued to be relevant.

Riel saw his key task as the re-establishment of order against the threat of disruptions. Educated in Montreal, a city with a vibrant public life, Riel understood the threat “opinion” might have for order.<sup>96</sup> Montreal’s political order, which was punctuated by violent confrontations (Gavazzi Riots, City elections, Canal Strikes) made clear to anyone who lived there that order was defined by the threat of violence.<sup>97</sup> The twinned threats of popular violence and official violence made the public sphere not only possible but imperative. As Lisa Ford and Lauren Benton have argued the “rage for order” was about finding a balance between the anxiety over petty despotism and reform, on the one hand, and strengthening the jurisdiction of the imperial centre on the other.<sup>98</sup> Without that balance, the space for public deliberation was impossible.

The trick, for Riel, was to avoid the double standard of settler colonial thinking according to which all violence by Indigenous People became illegitimate. To contain the potential

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<sup>95</sup> Hargrave, “13 November 1869,” *Montreal Herald*, in Begg, *Red River Journal*, 98.

<sup>96</sup> The literature is extensive, for an overview see the references in Dan Horner, “Shame upon you as men!”: Contesting Authority in the Aftermath of Montreal’s Gavazzi Riot,” *Histoire sociale/social history*, 44 (May/mai 2011): 29–52; and Horner, “Solemn Processions and Terrifying Violence: Spectacle, Authority, and Citizenship during the Lachine Canal Strike of 1843,” *Urban History Review/Revue d’histoire urbaine*, 38 (2010): 36–47. For a recent study of violence in the constitution of order in Montreal see Colin Grittner, “Privilege at the Polls: Culture, Citizenship, and the Electoral Franchise in Mid-Nineteenth-Century British North America,” (Phd Thesis, McGill University, Montreal, December 2015), 208–258.

<sup>97</sup> These reflections emerged from papers presented by Elsbeth Heaman and Colin Grittner at a conference organized on “Unrest, Violence, and the Search for Social Order” at University of New Brunswick and St. Mary’s University. A published volume is forthcoming from Toronto University Press.

<sup>98</sup> Lauren A. Benton and Lisa Ford, *Rage for Order: The British Empire and the Origins of International Law, 1800–1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 140–47.

disruption of popular rioting, and maintain the legitimacy of his authority from the perspective of British, Canadian, and American governments, Riel set out to create consensus within the community in the form of a government. On 6 November, the Provisional Government issued a public notice that extended “the hand of friendship to you our Fellow Inhabitants, and in doing so invite you to send twelve Representatives... in order to form one body with the above Council consisting of twelve members to consider the present political state of this Country, and to adopt such measures as may be deemed best for the future welfare of the same.”<sup>99</sup> With this act he formalized the principle, until now, unstated, that the public had the right to form a political council in the name of public order. The meeting began on 16 November and was loudly celebrated with a 24-gun salute. This social theatre again communicated to the wider settlement the significance of this meeting. This would not be the undisciplined public sphere of the meeting called by Dease. These representatives of the people were asked to observe decorum and procedure, a president was elected, a secretary was appointed, and minutes were recorded, although no efforts were made to publish them. Indeed, as Hargrave again pointed out, the public was kept out.<sup>100</sup> The *Nor’wester*, unwilling to believe that the French would really succeed, only reported that the English were unable to persuade the French to lay down their weapons.<sup>101</sup>

According to Riel’s notes of the Convention, written in 1869, the utmost care was given to presenting a unified front to outsiders. In the midst of the convention, Joseph Hargrave came and knocked on the door demanding to speak.<sup>102</sup> He had a public letter from the HBC Governor MacTavish.<sup>103</sup> According to his own notes, Riel resisted reading the letter and attempted to get

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<sup>99</sup> “Public Notice to the Inhabitants of Rupertsland,” doc. #1-016 in Riel, *CWLR*.

<sup>100</sup> Hargrave, “20 November 1869,” *Montreal Herald*, in Begg and Hargrave, *Reporting the Resistance*, 105.

<sup>101</sup> “Counsel with the French,” *Nor’wester* (26 October 1869), 2.

<sup>102</sup> Riel, “Compte rendu incomplet de la convention de novembre-décembre 1869,” doc. #1-017 in *CWLR*, 1:23–31.

<sup>103</sup> On 16 November, MacTavish sent his “Proclamation” to the *Red River Pioneer* to have it printed, but according to Alexander Begg, a Canadian annexationist altered the Proclamation to present it as having been inspired by

the English delegates to agree on a programme for the convention first and then deal with the Company's interests. The English party demanded that the letter from MacTavish be read. To force the Métis leader's hand, Ross demanded "Pourquoi avez vous pris le fort?" and followed up with "Monsieur MacTavish est encore le représentant de la Reine. Vous occupez le fort malgré lui...je demande que la communication...soit lu maintenant." The letter from MacTavish requested that everyone return to their homes and protested against the recent actions taken by the Métis to block the Queen's representative. MacTavish pointed out that he had the best interests of the settlement in mind as he too had children that were Red River born. After the reading, Ross claimed victory, "Je suis convaincu que nos compatriotes français obéiront maintenant que la volonté du gouverneur est connu..." There was silence, and Ross, pressing his advantage, repeated himself. But Riel had no patience for such games with a witty newspaper writer who had once mocked his father,<sup>104</sup> and made a decision that would change the movement dramatically. He said, "Une protestation emphatique n'a pas encore effacé ce qu'il y a de juste dans nos prétentions....Si nous nous rebellons contre la compagnie qui nous vend, et veut nous livrer et contre le Canada qui veut nous acheter, nous ne rebellons pas contre le gouvernement Anglais; nous reconnaissons le gouvernement d'Assiniboia autant qu'il existe."<sup>105</sup> This legal distinction between the HBC and the Council of Assiniboia stumped Ross who laughed in disbelief, "Vous faites semblant de le reconnaître." Riel, perhaps with a twinkle in his eye, turned to the French, "Est-ce que nous faisons semblant de la reconnaître?" He was gratified by a chorus of "Non!" Riel was demonstrating the qualities that would be necessary for leadership in

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Canadian "Loyalists." As Begg writes, it "shows the spiteful and unworthy feelings of Dr. Brown." "17 November 1869," in Begg, *Red River Journal*, 170–72.

<sup>104</sup> See above chapter 1.

<sup>105</sup> Riel, "Compte rendu incomplet de la convention de novembre-décembre 1869," doc. #1-017 in *CWLR*, 23–31. Consultation of the original text at AASB shows important distinctions in the manuscript from the edited version in the *CWLR*. See especially "Si" at the beginning of this phrase and the indicator of laughter at the end. "Compte rendu incomplet..." Riel Papers, MG3 D1-628, AASB.

the Métis movement: the ability to draw fine legal distinctions and to think on his feet about the political implications of his words. His practice in school debates and training in rhetoric made him more than a match for Ross, who was nonetheless a more experienced publicist. Now emboldened, Riel turned the tables on Ross, stating.

De plus nous sommes fidèles à notre patrie. Nous la protégerons contre les dangers qui la menacent. Nous voulons que le peuple de la Rivière Rouge soit un peuple libre aidons-nous les uns les autres. Nous sommes tous des frères et des parents[!]. Nous ne séparons pas. Voyez ce que dit Monsieur Mctavish. Il dit que de cette assemblée et des décisions de cette assemblée peut venir un bien incalculable. Unissons-nous: le mal qu'il redoute n'aura pas lieu. Voyez comme il parle. Est-ce étonnant, ses enfants sont des Métis comme nous.<sup>106</sup>

Wisely, Riel drew upon roots of Métis political legitimacy, authority came from family relations and to the land (*Wahkootowin*). MacTavish had children who were *Métis comme nous*, this was a source of authority in the Red River public, but, more importantly, they were also a reference to the potential unity (*unissons-nous*) of the community and the good that would come of acting together. Riel seized on these words to emphasize the links that already tied them together and made clear to any who doubted that there was an “imagined community.” In the Red River, like other Indigenous public spheres, authority was not from clever words used by newspaper men expressing their opinions, rather, it was about kinship and ties to the land.

Father Lestanc, generally quite critical of Riel, noted in his report to the Bishop, “Everybody I have seen agrees in saying that L. Riel surpassed himself in the preliminary debates, and that he flattened Ross to his own and everybody else’s satisfaction.”<sup>107</sup> Hargrave’s objection to the “secrecy” was not an issue for Riel because, despite the silence on paper, word got around.

Riel did not seek to make enemies and attempted to draw Ross in, referring repeatedly to

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> “Lestanc to Taché, 19 November 1869,” Quoted in Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 70.

“Ross, enfant de ce pays, chérissant ses compatriots” and “bien inspiré par l’amour de son pays.”

Riel continued to woo his opponent and made his case, “Monsieur Ross, faites parler votre patrie ne cherchez pas à la faire taire. Avec votre instruction, vos talents, dites à nos compatriotes anglais que Mon. McDougall n’est pas encore notre gouverneur.”<sup>108</sup> While flattering Ross, Riel also reminded him that in the Indigenous public sphere he belonged to the land.

Riel’s debating skills were also necessary to convince the French Métis, as well as the English-speaking population. He remarked to himself on the difficulties of uniting the French party. The evening before the meeting of November 24, Riel spoke for hours

Pas un n’était prêt. Que de craintes, d’hésitation, à vaincre. C’est incroyable les répugnances que j’ai eu à leur faire surmonter. Ce qu’il craignait le plus c’était les apparences d’une rébellion contre la Reine. Ce n’est qu’à force de leur montrer et de leur dire que nous restions fidèles à la reine; que le gouvernement d’Assiniboia en se vendant s’est tellement affaibli qu’il n’a plus la force nécessaire pour nous protéger.<sup>109</sup>

Riel was explicit about the need to assert a presence in the public, “Formons donc un gouvernement provisoire... Prenons les livres publics [et] l’argent public pour forcer McDougall à avoir affaire au public[!].” Aware of the legal implications he was careful: “je les avertis que pour courir moins de risque nous ne proclamerions la formation du gouvernement Provisoire qu’après le 1 Décembre [the date of the sale of the territory].” In the end he was persuasive and the French party agreed. So when the English party returned prepared to discuss terms they were faced with a clear choice. They replied evasively, but agreed to consult their parishes.

In the meantime, Riel stepped up his control of the channels of communication. The issue of 23 November would be the *Nor’wester’s* last. When Dr. Brown refused to print the French “public notice” Riel closed the paper and seized the printing press.<sup>110</sup> He now took steps to

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<sup>108</sup> Riel, “Compte rendu incomplet de la convention de novembre-décembre 1869.”

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> “Fort Garry” *Montreal Herald*, 29 November 1869, quoted in *Reporting the Resistance*, 98.

publicize his own programme seeking collaboration. In late December, a newspaper, the *New Nation*, initially edited by Henry Robinson, a pro-American annexationist, was set up with the acquiescence of Riel. According to Morton, Riel realized that its annexationist tone helped his cause by increasing the pressure on the Canadian government.<sup>111</sup> Nonetheless, Riel watched this paper carefully and notified Robinson when an “error” was published. Later in March 1870, his ally Joseph Royal, a Montrealer, with editorial experience, including with the Montreal paper, the *Nouveau Monde*, took up the responsibility for the paper. This would become the “official organ” of the Métis party. This paper would become a key means of controlling communication in the public sphere and illustrates the importance of the new forms of political communication to the Métis programme.

Meanwhile, time was pressing and the Canadian governor-to-be, MacDougall, played his next gambit on December 1. He crossed the invisible line of the international border and read a (fabricated) “Royal Proclamation” to the prairie public. His audience was small, on a largely empty plain (according to some reports in the midst of a snow storm). He then returned to the protection of the American side.<sup>112</sup> As public theatre it was a farce; certainly his American hosts thought so. But, when printed copies appeared in the settlement, it threw the Convention into question. The Proclamation had been printed on a hand-press that had escaped Riel’s attention.<sup>113</sup> It demanded that all “loyal subjects” lay down their weapons, and appointed a “Protector of the Peace” to raise an armed force to put down rebellion. Again Ross resorted to strong-arm language to demand that the French lay down their arms. Despite suspecting foul play on

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<sup>111</sup> Morton bases his assessment on Begg’s Journal from 27 December, *Begg’s Red River Journal*, 85.

<sup>112</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 73.

<sup>113</sup> Peel, *Early Printing in the Red River Settlement 1859-1870*, 25–27.

MacDougall's part, which would later prove true,<sup>114</sup> Riel responded with a familiar display of political acumen and took it at face value, "Si Monsieur McDougall est vraiment gouverneur aujourd'hui, la chance pour nous est plus belle que jamais. Il n'a plus qu'à nous prouver son désir de bien nous traiter. Ayons de lui la garantie de nos droits. S'il nous garantit nos droits, je suis un de ceux qui iront à sa rencontre pour l'escorter jusqu'au siège de son gouvernement."<sup>115</sup> Dumbfounded, Ross could only reply, "What should we ask?" This was what Riel had been waiting for, over the next six hours Riel and Ross drew up the first "Bill des droits."

The next hurdle was to select a formal delegation to approach MacDougall; again, the English hesitated. According to Begg and Hargrave, the hang-up was the French insistence upon an Act of Parliament to ensure recognition of their rights. Riel thought the English were cowards for refusing to include this demand. According to his own notes, he burst out in anger, referring to himself in the third person: "Riel se lève et parlant chaleureusement, Allez ... retournez-vous-en paisiblement sur vos fermes. Restez dans les bras de vos femmes. Donnez cet exemple à vos enfants. Mais regardez-nous agir. Nous allons travailler et obtenir la garantie de nos droits et des vôtres."<sup>116</sup> Previous biographers have concluded, uncritically, that these words show his instability and petty moods.<sup>117</sup> But, why did Riel take the time to record his own anger in a private document, in the third person no less? It was almost certainly not recorded in the spur of

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<sup>114</sup> This was in fact illegal as by this time Macdonald, now aware of the problems in Red River, had communicated to England that Canada would only take control once order was re-established. However, this would have been impossible for Riel to prove on the spot. See Begg, *Red River Journal*, 427.

<sup>115</sup> "Compte rendu incomplet de la convention de novembre-décembre 1869," 30-1. Previous biographers have also noted this reaction as a flash of political genius. See Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 72. Morton, *Red River Journal* 427. They however do not link this to a strategy to create a public consensus.

<sup>116</sup> "Compte Rendu incomplet de la convention de novembre-décembre 1869," doc. #1-017 in *CWLR*, 23-31.

<sup>117</sup> Stanley writes, "His face blazing with choler, Riel shouted to the English." Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 74. Stanley's choice of words, "furious thinking" (70) to describe Riel's deliberation over the course of these events is noteworthy. On the other hand, he admits that Riel "displayed an understanding of the psychology of the people to whom Riel was speaking, a thorough understanding of their prejudices and their loyalties." (69) Much of Flanagan's book is based upon a series of "emotional crises," an assessment which relies upon a largely outdated Freudian analysis of suppression and frustration of natural emotion. It is a thesis which Flanagan uses to buttress his assessment of an alienated Riel. *Louis "David" Riel*, passim.



the moment, but rather as an afterthought. This expression of emotion was not a loss of control, but was socially legitimate—an effort to demonstrate his control.<sup>118</sup> Behind closed doors Riel’s anger was intended to justify his actions; in the public he was much more careful.<sup>119</sup> As a social emotion, anger implies an audience and is performed to achieve a specific reaction. Anger, as research into the history of emotions shows, should not be simply understood as an “uncontrolled outburst.”<sup>120</sup> Rather than becoming unhinged, Riel’s reaction should be read as a remarkable display of emotional expression based upon an understanding of its effect, creating shame, upon the particular audience. According to historian Nicole Eustache, in the public sphere, emotions can carry more weight than carefully reasoned argument.<sup>121</sup>

Public events called for different actions than closed committee meetings, and it was a distinction that Riel understood well. The contrast between the controlled debate and the deliberations in the public are shown by a “public meeting” hosted by Mr. Bannatyne on 26 November at the Fire Engine House. According to Hargrave, numerous American citizens, local residents, Canadian new arrivals, members of the “late government,” and Riel were present.<sup>122</sup> Hargrave writes that Riel was reluctant to take part in the public debate, but when pressured by the audience to make clear the source of his authority he responded that, “he drew his authority, as did all other constitutional rulers, from the people. He said the French did not wish to impose their Provisional Government on any or all of the English, and that anyone who did not wish to

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<sup>118</sup> For political uses of anger see Barbara Rosenwien, *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

<sup>119</sup> Carol and Peter Stearns argue, “anger is based on an intellectual evaluation. For an historian such approaches have the appeal of reminding one that man, though surely an animal, is a thinking animal and that this may make a big difference.” *Anger: The struggle for Emotional Control in America’s History* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986).

<sup>120</sup> William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>121</sup> Eustace, *1812: War and the Passions of Patriotism*, xvi–xvii.

<sup>122</sup> Hargrave, “4 December 1869,” *Montreal Herald*, 25 December 1869, in *Reporting the Resistance*, 129–37.

own allegiance to it was at liberty to remain beyond its pale.”<sup>123</sup> Riel still felt that uncontrolled opinion disrupted public welfare, rather than serving its interests.

Riel distinguished between published statements and closed negotiation as a means of constructing and uniting public will. Instead of a public debate between differing opinions, the public saw the conclusion of the convention as one of unity marked by a flag-raising ceremony at Fort Garry on December 10.

### **3.6 Importance of Flags: Social Theatre in the public sphere**

As in other Indigenous communities, non-literate forms of expression were particularly important for shaping public opinion in the Red River settlement. As Elizabeth Elbourne points out literate and non-literate forms were not exclusive but tended to overlap.<sup>124</sup> In the interest of trade, as well as security, creative solutions to communicating across multiple media were needed on a daily basis in a borderlands context. Non-literary practices maintained peace, often symbolizing a time and place for negotiation and trade. As Robert Daniel Laxer argues in his recent dissertation “Listening to the Fur Trade,” musical performances, originally associated with war and military discipline, became cross-cultural and were central to establishing and maintaining relationships in the fur trade context.<sup>125</sup> Singing was another popular means of expressing political opinion. Hargrave reported that *Des tribulations d’un roi malheureux* was being sung in honour of McDougall.<sup>126</sup> Mocking “notre Monarque” and his “songe passé,” the

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<sup>123</sup> J. J. Hargrave, “Fort Garry, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1869,” in *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>124</sup> Elizabeth Elbourne, “Orality and Literacy on the New York Frontier: Remembering Joseph Brant,” in *Critical Perspectives on Colonialism: Writing the Empire from Below*, ed. Fiona Paisley and Kirsty Reid (New York: Routledge, 2014). See also Lyle Dick, “The Seven Oaks Incident,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 2, no. 1 (1991): 91–113.

<sup>125</sup> Robert Daniel Laxer, “Listening to the Fur Trade: Sounds, Music and Dance in Northern North America, 1760–1840” (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2015).

<sup>126</sup> “Fort Garry, 4 December 1869,” *Montreal Herald*, 25 December 1869, in *Reporting the Resistance*, 135–37.

sarcastic verse is a good illustration of Métis sense of humour and pride. Other pieces inspired by political events have survived from this period and are said to have been composed by Riel. One was a satire that mocked Charles Mair, “À la pointe de chênes se trouve un chien de Mer...”<sup>127</sup> Like the singing explored by Daniel Laxer, visual symbols were “sensuous.” In other words, because they were communicated through the material body, they required ritualized performance more than precise understanding.<sup>128</sup> As such they were key to contesting and adapting cultural identities and political messages in the Red River public sphere.

Visual performances were effective techniques in the field of social theatre. Fort Garry, the residence of the Governor of the settlement, was not just a sign of HBC authority, but was an intercultural site that could serve various interests. Located at the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, it was a central site of authority. As Alexander Ross wrote in 1856, “Upper Fort Garry, the seat of the colony Governor, is a lively and attractive station, full of business and bustle...here the ladies wear their silken gowns, and gentlemen their beaver hats. Its gay and imposing appearance make it the delight of every visitor; the rendez-vous of all comers and goers.”<sup>129</sup> Symbolically as well as geographically central, the Fort came closest to representing the general, if not universal, political will of the settlement. Its Mess Hall was known as a source of considerable rumour and discussion. As a key site in the public sphere of Red River, performances here were direct claims upon that universality. Its authority was negotiated and, like the fur trade poles described by Carolyn Podruchny, was “used in a process of creolization and developed meanings specific to the fur trade context.”<sup>130</sup> The occupation of the fort was one

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<sup>127</sup> See doc. #1-040 in *CWLR*, 85–87. Two others praise the Métis people and the nation, *La Métisse*, and *Les Premiers Temps*. See docs. #41 and #42 in *Ibid.*, 88–91.

<sup>128</sup> Joy Parr, “Notes for a More Sensuous History of Twentieth-Century Canada: The Timely, the Tacit, and the Material Body,” *Canadian Historical Review*, 82, No. 4 (2001): 720–45.

<sup>129</sup> Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1856), 142–43.

<sup>130</sup> Podruchny, Gleach, and Roulette, “Putting Up Poles.”

of many activities in the fur trade that involved disparate meanings.

Ceremonies were claims of control over trade and resources, but as Michael Witgen has argued, they were “interpreted and ceremonially enacted as the creation of an alliance.”<sup>131</sup> Much fanfare was made when the Métis, in the name of the Provisional Government, ran up a flag with a *fleur de lys* and a shamrock (to represent the French and Irish composition of the government) on a white background on 10 December at the fort. The brass band from St. Boniface played, rifles and the fort guns were fired, and congratulatory speeches were made. As a visual statement, the flag became an object of public comment. The Canadian press reported that it replaced the British flag and ominous warnings were made about the presence of the shamrock.<sup>132</sup> Detractors saw a fearsome Fenian influence, but others denied it. Riel later claimed that the Provisional Government flag was always flown under the British flag and rejected the accusation of Fenian sympathies.<sup>133</sup> As he neglected to mention the shamrock, it might appear that Riel was attempting a cover-up. However, Alexander Begg recorded in his journal that during the ceremony, Riel announced that he “hoped his men were all loyal to the Queen.”<sup>134</sup>

Flags had a long tradition of representing political identities in Red River and were as important as newsprint to public opinion. Both the HBC and the Northwest Company had identified themselves with flags.<sup>135</sup> On 18 March 1816, HBC men reported that the “flag of the

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<sup>131</sup> Michael J. Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 73.

<sup>132</sup> Alexander Begg, “17 December 1869,” *Globe*, 6 January 1870, in *Reporting the Resistance*, 170.

<sup>133</sup> In 1874, Riel responded to Dr. Lynch’s claim that the Métis flew a Fenian flag, “Les Métis ont un drapeau qu’ils ont toujours subordonné au drapeau britannique et ce drapeau est le drapeau fleur de lys.” “Réponse au docteur J.S. Lynch,” doc. #1-192 in *CWLR*, 337.

<sup>134</sup> Morton, *Begg’s Red River Journal*, 226. Hargrave also reported that Riel intended to hoist “St. George’s flag.” “11 December 1869,” in *Reporting the Resistance*, 162.

<sup>135</sup> During the conflict between the NWC and the HBC, flags were used to signal the capturing of a hostile fort. See “Copy of a Letter from Lieut.-General Sir John C. Sherbrooke, G. C. B. to the Earl Bathurst, K. G.; dated Quebec, 20th July 1818,” *Papers Relating the Red River Settlement*, 236.

halfbreeds” was flying over Fort Qu’Appelle on the Saskatchewan River.<sup>136</sup> In 1863, in order to ensure peaceful trade during the “Sioux Wars” Dakota Chief Little Crow (Thaóyate Dúta) suggested that all British traders carry a British flag to protect themselves.<sup>137</sup> In 1869, for many weeks, a provocation had been offered to the Métis by John Christian Schultz, one of the leaders of “The Canadas,” as he had proudly flown a flag with the word “Canada” sown into it at his house on a public road every Sunday.<sup>138</sup> Hargrave reported that Schultz had again threatened to do the same in December, “The hoisting of a flag of Canada, at a date long anterior to the actual transfer of the territory, though a matter insignificant enough in itself, was well understood to be intended as an expression of malevolence towards the out-going government, and was regarded by the French half-breed community as the harbinger of their coming humiliation.”<sup>139</sup> While the threat did not materialize, it was likely the motivation for the ceremony held at the fort on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Reports of an American flag flying at the Emmerling Hotel were another source of contention.

Flags, as political statements, were serious threats. In February, during “The Revolution,” an armed uprising by “the Canadas” against Riel’s government, the *New Nation* reported,

They passed through Winnipeg well armed and with a flag flying, about four o’clock in the morning, --stopping a while at the residence of Mr. Coutu, which they searched in the hope of finding there the President of the Provisional Government. They hoisted their flag at the Kildonan School-house,--a large red flag, with the Union-Jack and “God Save the Queen” embroidered on it. And all day long[,] armed men were coming and going in that usually peaceful locality, like ants in an ant-hill. Before night-fall 300 men had mustered...Capt. Boulton,

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<sup>136</sup> This flag was “about 4 ½ feet square, red & in the middle a large figure of Eight horizontally of a different colour.” Quoted in Bumsted, *Trials & Tribulations*, 17.

<sup>137</sup> “Little Crow stated to Governor Dallas... his people had no wish to injure any one they knew to be English in his person or property. He promised that the same line of conduct should be persevered in...He added that the exhibition of a red flag would be sure always to prevent the possibility of a mistake.” Hargrave, *Red River*, 292. See also “Visit from the Sioux” *Nor’wester*, 2 June 1863, 2.

<sup>138</sup> It was rumoured almost a year later that during his visit to Red River the Nova Scotian father of Confederation, a strong critic of William MacDougall and the Canadian clique in the settlement, had pulled down a Canadian flag in the settlement. “Hon. Mr Howe’s definition of a Red River Loyalist,” *New Nation*, 10 June 1870, 2.

<sup>139</sup> Hargrave, “11 December 1869,” *Reporting the Resistance*, 160.

Capt. Webb, Dr. Schultz and Mr. Mair were the principal figures in the party, and caucussing and counselling in abundance went on throughout the day.<sup>140</sup>

Flags were also used because of their flexibility. The amorphous nature of their symbolism communicated across cultural divides and was well suited to the interests of overlapping sources of authority on the plains. An elaborate tradition and speech by Grand Oreilles, an Ojibwe, recorded in 1814, at Fort William, shows how the spaces of authority in the Northwest were created by gathering together different forms of political legitimacy and putting them on public display as symbolic overlap. “The bones of Netam, the great chief, and father of the speaker, are preserved on a scaffold at Fort William, and his brother’s bones in the same manner at Lac la Pluie. There is always a flag placed over them by the Company, as a mark of distinction and respect for the memory of the dead chiefs.”<sup>141</sup> There is no record of such a practice at Fort Garry, but it was a site of authority universally respected. By flying a flag, the Métis were not claiming to have conquered an HBC fort, but were asserting themselves within this arrangement.

Flags continued to be a means of expressing divergent interests. Following a mass meeting in January, Begg reported that many inhabitants had brought with them other flags in the hope that they might replace the flag of the Provisional Government. Later, Riel gave orders to hoist the “Union Jack” on 20 April to celebrate the success of negotiations with the Canadian government. This was contested by William B. O’Donoghue, who favoured American annexation, and he raised the flag of the Provisional Government. Apparently the two men continued to wrangle over the flags until Andre Nault was ordered to stand as an armed guard at the base of the British flag. At this impasse, O’Donoghue uprooted the flagpole in front of

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<sup>140</sup> “The Revolution,” *New Nation*, 18 February 1870, 2.

<sup>141</sup> “Speech of the grandes Oreilles, a great chief of the Chippaways made in the Indian Hall at the forks of the Red River, on the 19th June 1814,” *Papers Relating to the Red River Settlement*, 14.

Schultz's store, and brought it to Fort Garry. Begg wrote that because of his defence of the flag, "Riel rose fifty percent in the estimation of most people."<sup>142</sup> At least one person, Mrs. Begg found the whole affair ridiculous for, on 29 April, a shawl was hoisted on a pole in front of her store.<sup>143</sup> The Métis guards sent someone from the Fort to investigate.

Mrs. Begg's sarcasm reinforces the message that flying flags required mediation and moderation as it could either inflame or reassure other powerful political brokers. Amongst such power brokers were other Indigenous peoples inhabiting the Northwest borderlands, such as the Dakota. Joseph Hargrave reported in late December of 1869, "...the public mind was much agitated on learning the presence of about fifty Sioux [Dakota] armed with guns, within twenty miles of Fort Garry."<sup>144</sup> Rumours that the "Swampy" Indians to the South were also arming themselves circulated through the settlement, though Hargrave discounted them as a threat. Hargrave was evidently relieved to report, "Riel interfered, and, advising the village troops to desist, himself went to meet the Sioux at Sturgeon Creek about six miles west from Fort Garry."<sup>145</sup> Flying the British flag was a means to defuse the tension and reassure Indigenous allies.

A more detailed report by Alexander Begg provides insight into Riel's diplomacy. The meeting at the house of Jason McKay was marked by careful ceremonial protocol.<sup>146</sup> This formality confirmed that the Provisional government would be respectful and listen. Accordingly, the chief then took off his head dress which he laid at his feet, a motion which, though incomprehensible to the present author, must have had symbolic significance, and spoke,

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<sup>142</sup> "21 April 1870," in Begg, *Red River Journal*, 360.

<sup>143</sup> "29 April 1870," in *Ibid*, 365.

<sup>144</sup> "1 January 1870," *Reporting the Resistance*, 195. For Alexander Begg's account see "31 January 1869," in *Begg's Red River Journal*, 247–49.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>146</sup> "11 January 1870," *Reporting the Resistance*, 207.

he and his braves having heard so many tales regarding the difficulties amongst the settlers, had determined on coming down to see for themselves so as to find out the truth—that they did not wish to interfere in the quarrel—nor did they want to harm any one being at peace with the Settlement—referring to a large silver medal with Victoria’s head on one side and the British coat of arms on the other, he said that he and his band had received protection during the last eight years under that medal, and he wanted to know if there was any fear of his losing that protection. He ended by saying that he would be pleased to receive their usual New Year’s presents. At this time Mr. Riel arrived, having with him about twenty-five pounds of tobacco, which he presented to the Chief, and promised further presents in the morning, the Chief having agreed to return to the Portage the next day.

Like the flag, British medals were objects of performative authority that crossed cultural divides. They marked the loyalty of the Ojibwe, the Cree, and the Sioux and were frequently displayed, even threateningly, to remind anyone that was watching of the wearer’s relationship with the King.<sup>147</sup> The present of tobacco brought by Riel was another important part of the ritual. It also signified recognition and respect for colonial ties—perhaps Riel was even claiming to be the representative of the Crown. Recognition and negotiation with these symbols of authority were key to power in the settlement. Flags and medals both evoked the authority of the British crown, and public opinion. Consequently, they provided a common basis upon which the Métis and the Dakota could engage in respectful discussion.

A meeting between Riel and “Prince’s Indians,” an Ojibwe group farming in St. John’s Parish, was planned for 4 January. It likely involved similar navigation of Indigenous, non-literate forms of communication, and concluded with a declaration of British loyalty.<sup>148</sup> Riel’s position towards the Crown was also reinforced at a public meeting with the Métis of Oak point. This community, identified with the leadership of Charles Nolin, proved to be one of the most resistant to Riel’s leadership. Similarly, the Métis at Portage Laprairie, associated with Pierre

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<sup>147</sup> As Sarah Carter’s study of vice-regal visits shows, such events set a pattern of reaffirming the imperial presence in the Plains. At these events, mutual expressions of loyalty were made, treaty partners were reminded of obligations and promises, and advocacy was requested. Carter, “Your Great Mother Across the Salt Sea’.”

<sup>148</sup> See Begg “29 December 1869,” *Red River Journal*, 245.



Laveiller, were uneasy with Riel's leadership. Expressed visually and verbally, "loyalty to the Crown" proved to be the most effective and universal political idiom to unite diverse groups in the Northwest borderlands. Loyalty could incorporate ideas of negotiation, accommodation, and toleration necessary for family relationships even if at first glance constitutionalism and rights talk, which characterized the rhetoric of "public opinion," might seem incongruous with the Indigenous ideas of family ties and obligations. Further while it complicated his relations with the American annexationists, the majority was against that influence.

In a borderlands context where identities were under flux and subject to a variety of forces, clothing was another useful mode of communication.<sup>149</sup> As a marker of class or culture, clothing could declare solidarity or difference. Anton Treuer argues, where "civilization" and "barbarism" were the boundaries of political legitimacy, sartorial politics were naturally essential even if they might also be duplicitous.<sup>150</sup> His biography of Bagone-giizhig (Hole-in-the-Day), an Ojibwe from Gull Lake (in Minnesota), argues that such politics of appearance crossed cultural boundaries allowing leaders to claim legitimacy in both Ojibwe civil, military, and religious traditions and the traditions of white settlers. Likewise, Gloria Bell has argued that dress was an important aspect of Métis social and cultural identity.<sup>151</sup> Newcomers made frequent comments on Métis flashy dress, some more positive than other.<sup>152</sup> George Winship, a Canadian newspaper

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<sup>149</sup> Gloria Bell, *Sewing Ourselves Together: Clothing, Decorative Arts and the Expression of Metis and halfbreed Identity* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2004). Sophie White, *Wild Frenchmen and Frenchified Indians: Material Culture and Race in Colonial Louisiana*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). Blanca Tovías, "Power Dressing on the Prairies: The Grammar of Blackfoot Leadership Dress 1750-1930," in *The Politics of Dress in Asia and the Americas*, edited by Mina Roces and Louise P. Edwards (Portland, Oregon: Sussex Academic Press, 2009). Timothy J. Shannon, "Dressing for Success on the Mohawk Frontier: Hendrick, William Johnson, and the Indian Fashion," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 13-42.

<sup>150</sup> Treuer's study is a useful comparison, to Riel's career, of parallel political strategies in the Northwest borderlands. He too points to the spectacular, and crosscultural, nature of Bagone-giizhig's politics "Such a claim did not have to be voice; it was evident from his appearance. His clothing suggests his awareness that politics was all about impressions." Anton Treuer, *The Assassination of Hole in the Day* (St. Paul: Borealis Press, 2011), 87.

<sup>151</sup> Gloria Bell, *Sewing Ourselves Together*

<sup>152</sup> Gloria Bell, "Oscillating Identities," in *Métis in Canada: History, Identity, Law and Politics* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2013), 30.

editor, remarked upon the “comfortable and ornamental” dress of the “halfbreed” fur merchants, “whose happy appearance and grotesque habiliments [cast] a sort of romantic halo over them.”<sup>153</sup>

Cory Willmott and Kevin Brownlee argue that the fashion sense of Anishinabeg leaders can tell us much about the shifting balance of power, and the colonizer’s political power to assign leadership according to new colonial relations.<sup>154</sup> In this respect adapting European cultural codes meant accepting, or at least navigating, colonial hegemony.<sup>155</sup> Participants in the public sphere had to “dress the part,” and “civilized” clothing shaped their authority. Given the overlapping nature of publics in the region, it was double-edged. Broadly, visual performances were a source of authority that Riel had to recognize.

Riel was subject to the scrutiny of fashion critics. According to George Winship, Riel’s dress was a metaphor for his success. “Notwithstanding his indolence, and general good-for-nothingness, he [Riel] was a handsome, college educated, and well dressed fellow, and apparently waiting for something to turn up for him to do suitable to his tastes. He was educated in Quebec, some said for a priest, but in any event he acquired a good education and with it a smattering of the principles of representative government.”<sup>156</sup> Others were more biting. A reporter for the *Globe* described Riel in detail:

He was a man about thirty years of age, about five feet seven inches in height—rather stoutly built. His head was covered with dark, curly hair; his face had a Jewish kind of appearance, with a very small very fast receding forehead. This, I was sure, was M. Le President Riel, and he stood gazing at me in the most piercing manner; at least, there is no doubt, he thought so. I did my utmost to realize in him a Napoleon or an Alexander, but it was a failure—a dead signal

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<sup>153</sup> George B Winship Papers. Series 10011 Box 321905, North Dakota Historical Society.

<sup>154</sup> “The blue coat, which represented the Indigenous mode of reciprocal exchange, gave way to the red coat, which represented the colonial market mode of exchange in which achieved status, rather than kinship relations, was the primary index of identity.” Cory Willmott and Kevin Brownlee, “Dressing for the Homeward Journey: Western Anishinaabe Leadership Roles Viewed through Two Nineteenth-Century Burials,” in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, ed. Laura Peers and Carolyn Podruchny (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 77.

<sup>155</sup> For a similar argument about Blackfoot military uniforms see Tovías, “Power Dressing on the Prairies”.

<sup>156</sup> George B Winship Papers. Series 10011 Box 321905. North Dakota Historical Society.

failure,--I could not get beyond the fact that there stood before me a Linen Draper's assistant. There could be no mistake about that, and though he stood looking at me full ten minutes, he could not put the Linen Draper out of my mind, and if he had continued to gaze till now, the result would have been all the same. He was clad in a light tweed coat and black trousers, and he seemed exceedingly proud of them—and well he might, for it is as certain as the fact that he wore them, that these clothes were purchased with the price of his poor widowed mother's only cow.<sup>157</sup>

Such attacks are a good reminder of the techniques of the Canadian press at the time. Opinions were based more upon racist and xenophobic prejudice than upon reason, or even

“enlightenment.” Other papers were prepared to attack such misrepresentation, for instance the *Nouveau Monde*,<sup>158</sup> but they also had to be met head-on. Later in life, Riel would frequently remind his audience that his clothing was not a sign of pride but a reflection of his humble origins. “For fifteen years I have been neglecting myself. Even one of the most hard witnesses on me said that with all my vanity, I never was particular to my clothing; yes, because I never had much to buy any clothing.”<sup>159</sup> Implicitly, he was suggesting that he thought not buying clothing was a sacrifice, one that others should recognize as a virtue in him. This was a reflection of his honest and humble intentions for the youngest and poorest of nations. To stress the comparison, sartorial choices were consciously made by most political actors, for instance, John A. Macdonald, far more of a dandy than Riel, wore loose ties and shaved his beard.<sup>160</sup> Riel's combed hair, his moustache, and tie were laden with unstated political symbolism, and he played up the drama of this populism.

Photographers had a particularly important role to play in legitimizing the appearance of political leadership. Consider the famous photograph of the Métis National Council, likely taken

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<sup>157</sup> Quoted in *Reporting the Resistance*, 171.

<sup>158</sup> *Nouveau Monde*, 18 December 1869 in *Ibid*.

<sup>159</sup> Louis Riel, “Address to the Jury,” doc. #A3-012 in *CWLR*, 536.

<sup>160</sup> Richard J Gwyn, *John A.: The Man Who Made Us: The Life and Times of John A. Macdonald*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2007), 72.

by Larsen Ryder.<sup>161</sup> The image is iconic in the same way that images of the “Fathers of Confederation” were arranged and suggests an implicit comparison. Riel is clearly the centre of the movement and the one face that is most clearly in focus and carefully composed. As discussed in Chapter Two, Riel’s *Carte de Visite*, taken as a student at the College, illustrates that he was well versed in the political content of such images. Whether Riel requested the photograph or not, by sitting for the image he was participating in a tradition of political representation.

Flags, clothing, photographs, medals, and tobacco presents all mattered in the Indigenous and non-Indigenous public spheres. As amorphous and sensuous modes of communication they were particularly suited to the borderland context, and at least in the case of tobacco had economic relevance. Such symbolic politics provided a basis for achieving consensus because they were “gathered” around British authority. Directly and indirectly referencing the relationship between the “speaker” and the British monarch, these forms of communication were also a means of challenging the written authority of others who claimed to represent the Crown. For this reason they were critical to formulating the Métis resistance to Canadian annexation.

### **3.7 Gender and the Public Sphere**

The shifting of political legitimacy was rooted in broad structural changes linked to the Red River economy. The marketplace, as the primary site of exchange, was the primary driving factor. According to Gerhard Ens and Nathalie Kermoal, the decline of the buffalo hunt had a

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<sup>161</sup> “Louis Riel and his Councillors,” Red River Cartes de Visite, University of Manitoba Archives Digital Archives, accessed URL: <https://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/> on 10 May 2017.

profound impact upon the social and political organization of the Métis.<sup>162</sup> As the Métis began to take up farming near the Red River Settlement, not only the patterns of consumption and production of goods changed, concrete changes were also happening in political organization. Buffalo hunt leadership was replaced with parish representation and appointments on the Council of Assiniboia. As Nathalie Kermoal argued, the disappearance of the buffalo was key to displacing women's authority.<sup>163</sup>

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the public sphere across the Northwest was also increasingly defined by the presence of white women, who, it was assumed, would act as "civilizing agents."<sup>164</sup> At the same time a racial logic of "otherness" increasingly portrayed Indigenous women as degraded or dangerous.<sup>165</sup> These efforts to control the identity and sexuality of Indigenous women paralleled changes across the British empire.<sup>166</sup> Adele Perry has written, "[g]ender is where the abiding bonds between dispossession and colonization become most clear."<sup>167</sup> In the Northwest, colonial relations had always been complicated by intimate relationships, but increasingly the state apparatus took a supervisory and normative role in the

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<sup>162</sup> Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Nathalie Kermoal, "Le 'temps de Cayoge': la vie quotidienne des femmes métisses au Manitoba de 1850 à 1900" (Phd Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1996).

<sup>163</sup> Kermoal, "Le 'temps de Cayoge'," 265. Diane Payment, "La Vie en Rose: Métis Women at Batoche, 1870-1920," in *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, Strength*, ed. Christine Miller and Patricia Chuchryk (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996). Gerhard Ens remarks that the marginalization of women began with labour and in the market place. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland*, 114-21.

<sup>164</sup> L'abbé George Dugas, "The First Canadian Woman in the Northwest." Manitoba Historical Society, MHS Transactions, series 1, number 62 (December 1901). Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 79-108.

<sup>165</sup> The literature on this topic is extensive. See the introduction by Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles, eds., *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005). An excellent recent monograph on this topic is Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014).

<sup>166</sup> Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Harlow, England: Pearson Longman, 2007); Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," *Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (2001): 829-65.

<sup>167</sup> Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 19.

sexual and domestic affairs of its subjects.<sup>168</sup> What is less recognized is the way Indigenous subjects saw this shift, and how they responded to what Kathleen Brown called the “gender frontier.”<sup>169</sup> The following section argues that Riel was quite aware of this process and attempted to use it to his own advantage.

Even if Riel understood how important the authority of women was in determining Métis hegemony through kinship, by employing “public opinion” he also participated in their marginalization because being a “manly” public man required it. Colin Grittner has argued for British North America, manliness was increasingly connected to the idea of a political representation.<sup>170</sup> The system of electing representatives by male householders led to a concentration of political power in male hands. Conversely, femininity was defined by the absence of political interest. This lack of political interest and broad agreement around the idea that women were a force for moderating tyranny and preventing abuse of power also became particularly useful for mitigating the use of violence and maintaining the public order.

Gendered representations were tied up in ideas about civilization.<sup>171</sup> During the “Sioux scare,” Alexander Begg reported the rumour “that they were all well supplied with arms and ammunition, at the expense, it was said by the Canadian Government; even the squaws being armed with knives and guns.”<sup>172</sup> For the “civilized,” violence by women was always a sign of the

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<sup>168</sup> Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915*. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008). Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Robin Brownlie, “Intimate Surveillance: Indian Affairs, Colonization, and the Regulation of Aboriginal Women's Sexuality,” in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, ed. Myra Rutherdale and Katie Pickles (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

<sup>169</sup> Kathleen Brown, “The Anglo-Algonquian Gender Frontier,” in *Negotiators of Change*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 1995), 26–48.

<sup>170</sup> Colin Grittner, “Working at the Crossroads: Statute Labour, Manliness, and the Electoral Franchise on Victorian Prince Edward Island,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 23, no. 1 (2012): 101.

<sup>171</sup> Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880 - 1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>172</sup> Alexander Begg, “11 January 1870,” *Globe*, 14 February 1870, in *Reporting the Resistance: Alexander Begg and Joseph Hargrave on the Red River Resistance* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2003), 206–8.

inability to engage in civil discourse.<sup>173</sup> By casting Indigenous women as dangerous and immoral, settlers justified the spatial and social segregation which led to dispossession.<sup>174</sup> Riel was well aware of how “savagery” was linked in the Canadian press to representations of gender. Simultaneously, the vulnerability of white women could potentially justify the violence of White rule.<sup>175</sup> The memoirs of women confirm that Riel was careful to always act the gentleman. Mrs. H. Macdonald wrote, “I often saw Louis Riel, when I was a girl. We all thought he was very handsome. He was very polite and well educated, and he was distinguished looking, with fine wavy hair.”<sup>176</sup> Mrs. Bernard Ross recalled her encounter with Riel during the flag raising ceremony on 10 December 1869. She was visiting Governor MacTavish who was staying at the Hudson Bay House at the opposite end of Fort Garry. Worried that her horse might bolt during all the celebrations and the gunfire she came down to ask Mr. Bannatyne if she would have any trouble leaving. He brought her request to Riel who escorted her to her sleigh himself. He “bowed low, with his left hand on his heart, and said very gallantly, ‘Ladies have always the first consideration, in war as in love!’”<sup>177</sup> He also gave his coat to protect Mrs. Schultz, pregnant at the time, when she wanted to accompany her husband Dr. Schultz to prison.<sup>178</sup> These positive representations of Riel by women demonstrate the complexity of colonial discourse surrounding

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<sup>173</sup> See also Rusty Bitterman, “Women and the Escheat Movement: The Politics of Everyday Life on Prince Edward Island,” in Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton, eds., *Separate Spheres: Women’s Work in the Nineteenth-Century Maritimes* (Fredericton: University of New Brunswick, 1994): 1-25.

<sup>174</sup> Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada’s Prairie West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), 9.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* American Papers carried numerous stories of “captivity” which informed a White Settler press bent upon Native extermination. Originally published in 1863 see, for example Mary Butler Renville, *A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity: Dispatches from the Dakota War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012). See also Glenda Riley, *Women and Indians on the Frontier 1825-1915* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1984), 212.

<sup>176</sup> Mrs. Henry Macdonald’s words were recorded in W.J. Healy, *Women of Red River: Being a book written from the Recollection of Women surviving from the Red River Era* (Winnipeg: Women’s Canadian club, 1923), 119.

<sup>177</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 229.

<sup>178</sup> According to Begg, “credit is due to Mr. Riel for the gentlemanly and kind manner in which he treated the ladies of the party, as one instance he threw off his own coat to wrap around Mrs. Schultz as a protection from the severity of the weather.” See “9 December 1869” *Globe*, 31 December 1869 quoted in *Reporting the Resistance*, 149.



race and gender in the Northwest.<sup>179</sup> While the Canadian party attempted on numerous occasions to show the insult offered by the Métis towards their wives, Riel was careful to counteract such an excuse.

While playing the courtly gentleman, Riel used the “civilizing” presence of women to justify his conciliatory approach to politics and to temper his “strong leadership”. In February, to celebrate the formation of the government and to ease the tensions in the settlement, Riel promised to release hundreds of prisoners being kept in Fort Garry. But he delayed and tensions rose until Victoria MacVicar intervened. The *New Nation* printed the following story:

Determined to see the last man set free, if that were possible, she sat there for hours in order to effect her resolve. Where words of counsel or kindness would be effective with the prisoners or President, she used them freely and with effect. The prisoners were assured with a word from her—and the President—young and a bachelor—of course he could withhold nothing. All the prisoners were liberated, even the four who were at one time sentenced to be sent across the line as too dangerous to be at large.<sup>180</sup>

Riel consistently responded with generosity to the appeals of female petitioners.<sup>181</sup> He conformed to the social expectation that women exerted a moderating influence on the violence of men by allowing the decision to release the prisoners appear the result of feminine influence. In fact, by responding appropriately to the virtue and beauty of a young woman he reinforced his manliness. While this story was carried in the local paper, the realpolitik of the affair was that release of the prisoners defused the tensions in the settlement and removed the excuse for Canadian counter-insurgency.

Riel also employed representations of women in the public sphere to encourage the unity

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<sup>179</sup> For an extended consideration of the problematic nature of the normativity of “colonial discourse,” see Nicholas B. Dirks, ed., *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

<sup>180</sup> “A Lady on the Case,” *New Nation*, 18 February 1870, 3.

<sup>181</sup> Similarly, on March 11<sup>th</sup>, the *New Nation* reported that the petition of Mrs. McLean for the release of her husband and son from the prison had been granted. “Acknowledgement,” *New Nation*, 11 March 1870, 2. Riel also granted requests to protect the property of Mrs. Stewart and accommodated Elizabeth Louise née McKenney, the wife of Charles Mair.



and strength of the Métis movement. Consider the poem, *La Métisse*,<sup>182</sup> that he penned in the voice of a woman: “Je suis métisse et je suis orgueilleuse/D’appartenir à cette nation...” The refrain declares the singer’s desire to find a lover among the soldiers of the “petite armée.” The refrain runs,

Ah! Si jamais je devais être aimée  
Je choisirais pour mon fidèle amant  
Un des soldats de la petite armée  
Que commandait notre fier adjudant  
Je choisirais un des soldats  
Que commandait notre fier adjudant.<sup>183</sup>

This fictional Métisse does not represent a woman so much as the desires of heterosexual men and suggests how representations of women could be used to “eroticize” the nation.<sup>184</sup> *La Métisse* does not threaten the gender division. Rather, as Cecilia Morgan and Colin Coates argue for constructions of Madeline de Vercheres and Laura Secord,<sup>185</sup> it “captures” female sexuality and refashions it to support the heterosexual patriarchal order. But it also projected an image of devout and moral patriots. The poem concludes,

Je les ai vus, défendre le pays  
Avec autant d’amour que de vaillance.  
Que c’était beau de voir ces hommes fiers  
Courbant le front, prier la Providence  
De leurs aider à garder leurs foyers.

Other tropes of manliness, besides defending the “foyer,” were also used to describe political decisions. As William B. O’Donoghue said, Riel had “shown Canada that we are men not Buffalos.”<sup>186</sup> The *New Nation*, which delighted in Canada’s blunders, reported that Riel’s party,

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<sup>182</sup> “La Métisse,” doc. #4-041, *CWLR*, 1985.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> Joan B. Landes makes a similar argument for representations of women during the French Revolution in *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 168.

<sup>185</sup> Colin Coates and Cecilia Morgan, *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

<sup>186</sup> *New Nation*, 11 February 1870.

by contrast, was composed of “free and spirited men.”<sup>187</sup> While the Canadian press would attempt to undermine Riel’s manliness, in Red River his supporters reinforced it.<sup>188</sup> Conversely, to mock the Canadian officer, Colonel Dennis, a rumour spread that he had had to dress as an “Indian squaw” and been forced to carry “leggings” to escape the Métis patrols.<sup>189</sup> This seemingly trivial commentary should not be dismissed as merely partisan, but as part of the contest over control of the public sphere because both sides took them so seriously. These contests which were initiated in Red River had considerable power because they were echoed and sometimes magnified in the press.<sup>190</sup> As Joan Scott points out gender is not only “a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived relationships between sexes,” but also, a “primary way of signifying power.”<sup>191</sup>

Such gendered images justified the division of political spaces according to a familiar “separate spheres” ideology noted by feminist historians of the nineteenth century.<sup>192</sup> Representations of women were one thing, but, as noted by critics of the separate spheres framework in other contexts, the women in Red River were not easily contained by ideological or rhetorical concepts.<sup>193</sup> However, the role that women played in the Resistance is very difficult

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<sup>187</sup> “Canada’s Blundering,” *New Nation*, 14 January 1860, 2. In typically flamboyant language, it expanded: “We will not allow even the Dominion of Canada to trample on our rights without asserting the worm’s right to recoil. No God forbid we should be such mean, crawling, spiritless things as submit to an unceremonious thrusting into Confederation without being consulted. Bison Americanus is equal to the Beaver in spirit and pluck.”

<sup>188</sup> Critiques of Riel’s masculinity survived well into the twentieth century. For instance, John Mackie *The Rising of the Red Man: A Romance of the Riel Rebellion* (London: Jarrold and Sons 1904).

<sup>189</sup> “Colonel Denis’ Apology,” *New Nation*, 15 April 1870, 1.

<sup>190</sup> For a different but relevant analysis of Métis manliness see the analysis of Gabriel Dumont in Matthew Barrett, “‘Hero of the Half-Breed Rebellion’: Gabriel Dumont and Late Victorian Military Masculinity,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 48, no. 3 (August 2014): 79–107.

<sup>191</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 42–45.

<sup>192</sup> For the Canadian context, see especially Cecilia Louise Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: The Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada, 1791-1850*, Studies in Gender and History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). Carmen J. Nielson, *Private Women and the Public Good Charity and State Formation in Hamilton, Ontario, 1846-93* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2014).

<sup>193</sup> For an excellent discussion see Janet Vey Guildford and Suzanne Morton, eds., *Separate Spheres: Women’s Worlds in the 19th-Century Maritimes* (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994).

to reconstruct. Fragments and creative reconstruction suggest that women were continually present at grand assemblies and other ceremonies. One reporter for a Quebec newspaper suggested that presence of women was a sign of the Métis commitment: “au commencement des troubles, les femmes et les jeunes filles, loin d’être épouvantées, encourageaient leurs maris et leurs frères, et se rendaient elles-mêmes aux quartiers généraux pour les visiter et leur procurer les vivres, les habits, et chaussures qu’elles avaient chez elles.”<sup>194</sup> What evidence there is suggests that Riel counted on women’s active support. The example of Riel’s sister Sara suggests the kind of support that Métis women would give to the Métis community.<sup>195</sup> By taking the veil, Sara, like her Quebec counterparts, studied by Marta Danylewycz, found that religion provided an opportunity for public service in an increasingly patriarchal environment.<sup>196</sup> Women, played an important, though less visible, role in maintaining solidarity within the Métis nation in the face of colonial dispossession. While the ideal of a “separation of spheres” gained traction in the settlement, it was never really attained in social reality.<sup>197</sup> Women continued to exert both official and unofficial influence on the public affairs of the settlement.

The ideals did have some impact. With the death of his father in 1865, and despite the geographic distance and intentions to become a priest, Louis was expected to take charge over family affairs. Sara, by contrast, lost control over her property when she joined the Grey Nuns.

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<sup>194</sup> The letter from “une ami,” is dated 10 December 1869. *Courrier de S. Hyacinthe*, 10 January 1869, 2.

<sup>195</sup> Lesley Erickson, “Repositioning the Missionary: Sara Riel, the Grey Nuns, and Aboriginal Women in Catholic Missions of the Northwest,” in *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands* (Edmonton: Athabaska University Press, 2011); Lesley Erickson, “‘Bury Our Sorrows in the Sacred Heart’: Gender and the Métis Response to Colonialism—the Case of Sara and Louis Riel, 1848-83,” in *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women’s History*, ed. Sarah Carter et al. (Calgary: University of Calgary, 2005).

<sup>196</sup> For a more full discussion of women’s opportunities in the context of Quebec see *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

<sup>197</sup> Even as we acknowledge its complex social reality, we ought not disregard its power as an ideological metaphor. Cecilia Morgan argues that tropes of separate spheres were “not just intriguing literary devices but were instead strategies whereby relations of power were produced, organized and maintained,” *Public Men and Virtuous Women*, 10. See also Guildford and Morton, *Separate Spheres*.

When she attempted to use her Manitoba Act allowance lands to fund an orphanage, her superiors blocked her, arguing that the financial needs of the Riel family outweighed her religious work.<sup>198</sup> However, the gender division should not be drawn too clearly according to management of property for, as Chapter One described, Louis Riel's mother exercised an important role in managing the family property.<sup>199</sup>

Formally, women did not participate in petitions. They were not elected to the National Committee, nor to the Provisional Government. And while Riel's response to the racist attitudes of Canadians like Charles Mair shows that he respected women's authority in the public sphere, he also recognized the exclusivity demanded by the settler forms of authority. Even when it was suggested in the debates, Riel did not support women's right to vote. (During a discussion of Article 19 of the Bill of Rights Alfred Scott, the American born delegate for Winnipeg, proposed the enfranchisement of women. It was dismissed with laughter by the rest of the Convention.)<sup>200</sup> Riel's participation in the debate for the franchise was exclusively masculine: Riel argued that a rich man should have no more right to vote than a poor man: "Suppose a man's house were burned down, is he to be deprived of his vote? Does he lose his intelligence, because his house happens to be burned down? To advocate a property qualification is to speak in the interests of the rich as against the poor. Are there more honest men among the rich than among the poor? Are we not honest, though poor?"<sup>201</sup> After Riel's more republican ideas were voted down, the final version read:

every man in the country (except uncivilized and unsettled Indians) who has attained the age of 21 years, and every British subject, a stranger to this country,

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<sup>198</sup> Erickson, "Bury Our Sorrows in the Sacred Heart," 35.

<sup>199</sup> For an excellent study of the dynamics of widow property management see Bettina Bradbury, *Wife to Widow: Lives, Laws, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), passim

<sup>200</sup> *New Nation*, 11 February 1870, 3.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

who has resided three years in this country and is a householder, shall have a right to vote at the election of a member to serve in the Legislature of the country and in the Dominion Parliament; and every foreign subject, other than a British subject, who has resided the same length of time in the country, and is a householder, shall have the same right to vote on condition of his taking the oath of allegiance...

Riel concluded this debate with the following statement: “We have shown ourselves to the world to be capable of discussing creditably matters of the utmost political consequence...men of intellect and reason in discussing important matters.”<sup>202</sup>

To prevent colonial domination, Riel accepted the implications of representative and public politics and adopted the language of separate spheres. Riel’s poetry in fact recalls much of the chauvinistic ideals of the exclusivity of men as political agents, and his public performances increasingly relied upon a benevolent patriarchy that Bettina Bradbury and Brian Young have explored in Quebec.<sup>203</sup> While Riel’s authority was based upon a balance between the institutions of kinship as well as representative elections, his use of the public sphere marginalized the input of women. However, the division between male and female spheres was never absolute, nor clear. If feminine agency and political will were marginalized from the increasingly formal institutions, women continued to play an important role through kinship relations.

### 3.8 Mass Meeting

The climatic moment in the history of the Indigenous public sphere took place at Fort Garry on 19 January 1870.<sup>204</sup> The degree of public interest can be measured by the fact that despite the cold the meeting was held outside because there was no hall large enough to accommodate the

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<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Bettina Bradbury, *Wife to Widow*; Brian Young, *Patrician Families and the Making of Quebec: The Taschereaus and McCords* (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014).

<sup>204</sup> The details of these events have been described by previous biographers. See Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 78-98; Bumsted, *Louis Riel v. Canada*, 61-68.

large crowd. As Adam Gaudry has pointed out, this was a “properly constituted public assembly akin to the buffalo hunt’s founding meeting. This public assembly possessed voting and decision making powers, which they used regularly throughout the conduct of the meeting.”<sup>205</sup> Initially, Riel did not want to call the meeting, but agreed following the insistence of the newly arrived Canadian commissioner, Donald Smith, an HBC officer, who had family ties in the settlement. While the public meeting was not Riel’s objective, it ultimately led to a breakthrough for divergent parties and to negotiations for Canadian annexation.

At the end of December, Alexander Begg was writing that American influence over Riel was at its highest point.<sup>206</sup> News took some time to reach Canada, but already in early December John A. Macdonald recognized the potential threat to the Canadian deal with the HBC and sent three commissioners to counteract American influence. Riel took care to isolate the first two, Reverend Jean-Baptiste Thibault and Colonel Charles de Salaberry, who he quickly found out had no authority to negotiate, as they had been sent to persuade not to bargain.<sup>207</sup> The third commissioner, Donald Smith, took precautions to arrive unannounced and even left his official papers in Pembina as a safeguard. He worried that American advisors would silence any Canadian interests.<sup>208</sup> Once in the settlement, Smith made his official capacity known and, under pressure, revealed his commission. While worried about Smith’s intentions, Riel agreed to see his papers and sent a man to fetch them. However, Pierre Laveiller and Angus McKay, two

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<sup>205</sup> Gaudry, “Kaa-Tipeyimishoyaahk - ‘We Are Those Who Own Ourselves’,” 249. I do not however agree with Adam Gaudry that “Smith failed to realize that he was not addressing an unorganized gathering of people.” He was constrained by the limited directives of the Canadian government, but made very effective use of his links to the Company and local families.

<sup>206</sup> Riel certainly was playing for American favours, accepting William O’Donoghue into his “Provisional Government,” however by the beginning of January even Begg admitted that Riel was resisting further American influence. “13<sup>th</sup> January, 1870,” *Begg’s Red River Journal*, 259.

<sup>207</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 83.

<sup>208</sup> Begg reported that Riel’s letters were being monitored by the American annexationists, W. B. O’Donoghue, and Enos Stutsman. The latter sent his own letter to Riel hidden in the folds of a newspaper on 25 December 1869 cautioning him against negotiating with Canadians. Begg, *Red River Journal*, 242.

Métis who opposed Riel, and perhaps inspired by a bribe from Smith, arranged to intercept Riel's envoy and seized the papers. When Riel heard the news, he confronted the party en route. Alexander Begg described a horse chase along the road involving more than a dozen horses and sleighs. At the Rivière Salle, Riel declared that he would willingly sacrifice his life if they did not give back the papers. One of Smith's men, Pierre Laveiller, reportedly grabbed Riel by the throat and threatened to shoot him. What followed is unclear, but Riel somehow convinced the party to drive to Fort Garry, to open the papers and meet with Donald Smith there.<sup>209</sup> The other Canadian commissioners were also summoned and runners were sent all over the settlement to announce a public meeting.

The break within the French party was now public knowledge. However, the public meeting would serve to close that division and even bring in the English party. The meeting was chaired by Thomas Bunn, with Judge Black acting as a secretary.<sup>210</sup> Riel acted as French translator and the Reverend Henry Cochrane acted as the "Indian" translator which illustrates the broad range of interested parties present. First, Donald Smith read a letter to him from Joseph Howe who, acting as Secretary of State for the Provinces, appointed Smith as Government commissioner and outlined his charge to "bring about ...union with Canada," explain the principles of Canadian Government, and remove any misapprehensions. The second letter was from the Governor General of Canada to Smith. Riel interrupted him at this point, "Is that letter public or private?" After some confusion the chairman ruled it was public and Smith continued to read "...The people may rely upon [the imperial government] that respect and protection will be extended to the different religious persuasions (loud cheers)—that titles to every description

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<sup>209</sup> "18 January 1870," *Ibid.*, 264. While certainly one of the most exciting and dynamic events of the Red River Resistance it is difficult to assess the accuracy of Begg's report.

<sup>210</sup> The meeting was reported in detail "Mass Meeting: Mr. Smith Canadian Commissioner, before the People," *New Nation*, 21 January 1870, 2.

of property will be perfectly guarded (renewed cheers)—and that all the franchises which have existed, or which the people may prove themselves qualified to exercise, shall be duly continued or liberally conferred.”<sup>211</sup> Riel objected to the fact that it was not signed “Governor.” To which Smith replied it was signed “in my capacity as Her Majesty’s representative.”

Riel’s careful handling of what was public and private should not be read as an attempt to shut down communication. While Bumsted has remarked on this curious exchange, it has not received sustained study by any of Riel’s biographers. It was, I argue, an important attempt to draw the distinction between public and private affairs.<sup>212</sup> Only days before he had written a letter to the official Commissioners that he did not find in their papers “the requisite powers to treat.”<sup>213</sup> The Government of Canada continued to withhold information, and he was worried, legitimately considering his experience with MacDougall, about Canadian lies. After all, Smith had been in the settlement, without openly declaring his mission, for almost a month. Smith had also attempted to sneak the documents into the community without Riel’s approval, clearly there was a threat implied in his actions. Riel was trying to hold him to account, as here in a mass meeting the damage of a false report could be far-reaching. Riel was not afraid of the truth, but he was worried about what damage lies could do in the public sphere. Riel’s hesitancy was one born of experience dealing with Canadian annexationists like John Schultz and newspaper opinions which repeatedly lied. Riel was setting a boundary on what was public and what was private, as Habermas points out this is precisely the kind of management that the public sphere requires.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> Bumsted, *Louis Riel v. Canada*, 65.

<sup>213</sup> “Reply to the Canadian Commissioners,” *CWLR*, 50.

<sup>214</sup> Habermas writes, ““The model of the bourgeois public sphere presupposed strict separation of the public from the private realm in such a way that the public sphere, made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state, was itself considered part of the private realm.” *Structural Transformation*, 176.



The boundaries that Riel set were not those of a bourgeois public sphere but those of the Indigenous public sphere of Red River.

Smith then asked to read some letters sent by the Canadian government to MacTavish. Riel again objected “I do not want the document to be read.” But by now the crowd sensed the breakthrough and loud cries were made to have the letter read. The crowd was informed that William O’Donoghue had seized the letters and would not produce them. Even the secretary John Black, who was also the acting town magistrate, supported the reading of the letter, whereupon Riel told him that as secretary he was “out of his role.”<sup>215</sup> Such wrangling was uncharacteristic at formal public meeting, but order was restored when Alexander Bannatyne, with a formal motion based upon his status as a “settler,” requested the letters, the motion was put to a vote and was successfully passed. The letters were fetched and Smith read a telegram from the Queen that denounced the “misguided persons [who] have banded together to oppose by force the entry of the future Lieut-Governor [MacDougall].”<sup>216</sup> This led to a vocal demand that the prisoners be released (this was prior to Victoria MacVicar’s intervention). Riel refused to do this and Métis soldiers “ran” to their weapons. On this note, the meeting was adjourned until the next day.

On 20 January, the meeting opened on a conciliatory note, with an apology from the man who had demanded that the prisoners be released. More importantly, Smith revealed his own legitimacy to speak. First, he pointed out that he had only met with MacDougall on the road from Pembina and had not written anything to him. This statement was met with cheers. Even more persuasive was his second point,

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<sup>215</sup> Black, 52 years old, was miffed at this young upstart correcting him. He replied, “he had no idea that Mr. Riel could teach him his duty.” Consequently, on the following next day he declined the position. “Mass Meeting: Mr. Smith Canadian Commissioner, before the People,” *New Nation*, 21 January 1870, 2.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

Though personally unknown to you, I am as much interested in the welfare of this country as others. On both sides I have a number of relations in this land (cheers) not merely Scotch cousins, but blood relations[s]. Besides that, my wife and her children are natives of Rupert's Land (cheers). Hence though I am myself a Scotchman, people generally will not be surprised that I should feel a deep interest in this great country and its inhabitants (cheers). I am here today in the interests of Canada, but only in so far as they are in accordance with the interests of this country (hear, hear, and cheers).<sup>217</sup>

For the Red River public, public persuasion was about family relations. While working in Labrador Donald Smith married Isabella Hardisty, daughter of Richard Hardisty and Margaret Sutherland, a Métis from the Northwest.<sup>218</sup> Isabella's brothers had been sent to the Red River Academy and she had been educated in England.<sup>219</sup> In 1851 she married an English Métis trader, James Grant *à la façon du pays*. They separated, and by 1852 Isabella was living with Smith. While the Dictionary of Canadian Biography remarks that this was an embarrassment to Donald Smith for all his life, in Red River this was one of the most effective arguments that Smith could offer.

There followed a half-hour adjournment and business was resumed. Riel now took the initiative to suggest that 20 representatives be elected to meet on the 25<sup>th</sup> in the courtroom in order to consider Smith's commission. The motion was carried. Riel achieved what he had suggested from the beginning. Both the Catholic and the Anglican bishop then addressed the crowd to say they were pleased to see everyone coming together. Riel, however, had the last word.

Before this assembly breaks up, I cannot but express my feelings, however briefly. I came here with fears. We are not yet enemies (loud cheers) but we came very near being so. As soon as we understood each other, we joined in demanding what our English fellow subjects in common with us believe to be our just rights (loud cheers). I am not afraid to say our rights; for we all have rights (renewed cheers). We claim no half rights, mind you, but all the rights we are entitled to.

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<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> Alexander Redford, "Smith, Donald Alexander 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Strathcona and Mount Royal," *DCB*.

<sup>219</sup> See Syliva van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 232.

Those rights will be set forth by our representatives, and, what is more, gentlemen, we will get them (loud cheer).<sup>220</sup>

Riel had learned the importance of, and how to achieve, the unity that he was so looking for. He began his speech with “fears,” but unity was possible through understanding what they shared. It was certainly public theatre, but that was a necessary part of the new political sphere. Furthermore, Riel had forced the Canadians to negotiate according to Métis ideas of authority, and to show their own family ties to the land. Family ties continued to play an important part in the constitution of public authority in Red River and newcomers continued to be integrated into the Indigenous spheres of authority through family bonds.<sup>221</sup>

The family ties reinforced the argument for loyalty, which remained a constant theme of public discourse throughout the Resistance. Red River was a very different context from which Jeffrey McNairn observed in the Upper Canadian public sphere where a “preoccupation” with the imperial connection ultimately prevented Indigenous Peoples from sharing in public debate because they adopted “a paternal language that had long since been abandoned by most non-native males.”<sup>222</sup> Here public debate demanded that the imperial connection be linked to family obligations and remained a powerful claim to authority in the public sphere. Mediated by kinship ties, the “loyalist order framework,” identified by Jerry Bannister,<sup>223</sup> provided Riel with the means of reaching a consensus between diverse interests and united the community in common

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<sup>220</sup> *New Nation*, 21 January 1870, 2.

<sup>221</sup> Laura Peers and Jennifer S.H. Brown, “‘There Is No End to Relationship among the Indians’: Ojibwa Families and Kinship in Historical Perspective,” *The History of the Family* 4, no. 4 (December 1999): 529–55. Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 142–75.

<sup>222</sup> While noting that by 1843–4 the Mohawks had become more confident and interrogated the government and its officers, McNairn concludes that these connections were incompatible with “an informed, reasoned exchange among equal discussants to which most of the other addresses contributed.” *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada 1791–1854* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 219–20.

<sup>223</sup> Jerry Bannister “The Loyalist Order Framework in Canadian History, 1750–1840,” in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Michel Ducharme and Jean-François Constant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 98–146

cause. From this point on, loyalty to the Crown could be understood as a common base on which to operate.

Riel used of the language of British rights while at the same time making explicit, if ironic reference to the Indigenous half of their identity to reject of any arguments about the incompatibility between Métis and British identities. This refusal of the settler-native dichotomy was at the heart of the explanation that they could be both and have rights as both. This was at the heart of his critique of settler discourse that Indigenous peoples could not also have political claims. This is emphasized in the debates that ensued at the Convention of Forty.

The forty members met and elected three representatives to send as commissioners to Canada to negotiate terms of Confederation. The result was the Bill of Rights, a document that has received considerable study as it was the basis for the negotiation with the Canadian government. The result of these negotiations was the Manitoba Act, and the Confederation of the Province of Manitoba. It is worth, however, pausing to consider one illustrative aspect of the debate discussed in a recent article by Darren O'Toole.<sup>224</sup> Article 15 of the Bill called for the respect for "all properties, rights and privileges, as hitherto enjoyed by us." Riel raised the question whether "Indians" had claim to the whole country. For, as he stated, "I have heard of Half-breeds having maintained a position of superiority and conquest against the incursions of Indians in some parts of the country. If so, this might possibly be considered to establish the rights of the Half-breeds as against the Indians." George Flett objected, "for my part, I am a Half-breed but far be it from me to press any land claim I might have as against the poor Indian of the country (hear, hear). Let the Indian claims be what they may, they will not detract from

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<sup>224</sup> Darren O'Toole, "Thomas Flanagan on the Stand: Revisiting Métis Land Claims and the Lists of Rights in Manitoba," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 41, no. 1 (2010): 137–47. I have quoted extensively from the article because the phrasing is pertinent. The original source is *The New Nation* 4 February 1870, 4–6.

our just claims. We have taken the position and ask the rights of civilized men.” James Ross agreed. “The fact is,” he argued, “we must take one side or the other—we must either be Indians and claim the privilege of Indians—certain reserves of land an annual compensation of blankets, powder and tobacco [laughter]—or else we must take the position of civilized men and claim rights accordingly. We cannot expect to enjoy the rights and privileges of both the indian and the White man.” Prime Minister John A. Macdonald would have agreed; but Riel and the Métis certainly did not. Pierre Thibert responded, “rights put forward by Half-breeds need not necessarily be mixed up with those of Indians. It is quite possible that the two classes of rights can be separate and concurrent. My own idea is that reserves of land should be given to Half-breeds for their rights.”<sup>225</sup> As O’Toole notes, Pierre Delorme and another anonymous Métis made similar public claims. As for Riel, he reminded Ross of the “rights of civilised men in other countries” including those of “Great Britain [who] holds most of her possessions by right of conquest.” The consideration here, adds to O’Toole’s analysis, by pointing out that these questions were developed through the public sphere. Through public processes, the people of Red River developed a claim to rights that confronted Canada’s double standard head on. It would become a key point in the public claims of the Métis. Why, Riel and the Métis demanded to know, could “civilized Indians” not claim rights to land and political rights at the same time? White settlers without property could even vote. It was a cruel reversal of Habermas’ complaint.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> O’Toole, “Thomas Flanagan on the Stand,” 149.

<sup>226</sup> “Occupation of the political public sphere by the unpropertied masses led to an interlocking of state and society which removed from the public sphere its former basis without supplying a new one.” As a result “the foundation of a relatively homogenous public composed of private citizens engaged in rational-critical debate was also shaken.” Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 179.

The fallout was a matter for later. In 1869, the Métis still hoped for a fair deal in Confederation. There continued to be unrest from the “Canadas” who objected to being marginalized, but now, claiming the support of the universal public, Riel could act more decisively. On 5 March Riel called a meeting of the Provisional Government to reinforce the necessity for public order.<sup>227</sup> Riel titled his speech to the Provisional Government, somewhat presumptuously, but with a clear aim to claim political legitimacy, “Address before the Legislature of Rupert’s Land.”<sup>228</sup> He began, “One result of our labours is that the people generally now have, for the first time in the history of this land, a voice in the direction of public affairs.” He continued, “[l]et us, then, see to it that the public are no more allowed to rush together, on one side or the other, in such a manner as they have gathered of late.” He concluded, “our politics will be,—good government for the people, as soon as we can establish it; and public prosperity by every means which we can devise.” While full of promise, “good government for the people,” was also full of warning.<sup>229</sup>

In late March, Riel held an interview with William MacTavish to restore “free and unconditional” commerce in the settlement. The results were published in *The New Nation* on 2 April 1870, and later reported in Canadian newspapers and the American consulate.<sup>230</sup> With this document Riel gained considerable recognition, and the authority of the Provisional Government was strengthened by an HBC promise to: 1) recognize the Provisional Government; 2) loan £3,000 sterling to the government; 3) guarantee a further £2,000 loan; 4) pay £4,000 for maintaining a military force; 5) immediately recirculate Company bills; and 6) hold in reserve

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<sup>227</sup> The “Official Order” was drawn up by Louis Schmidt on the 5<sup>th</sup>, the meeting was held on the 9<sup>th</sup>. *CWLR*, 58.

<sup>228</sup> “Address before the Legislature of Rupert’s Land,” doc. #1-039 in *Ibid.*, 60–61.

<sup>229</sup> Security of the state, or good government, is a deeply rooted political institution in British North America. See the forthcoming volume from Toronto University Press. “Unrest, Violence, and the Search for Social Order.”

<sup>230</sup> Riel, “Lettre à William Mactavish, 28 March 1870,” doc. #1-047 in *CWLR*, 68. *New Nation*, 2 April 1870. The agreement was also published in *Le Nouveau Monde* (Montréal), 10 May 1870 and in *Le Métis*, 21 November 1874. For the English translation sent to the American consul see #1-050 in *Ibid.*, 72–73.

“une quantité spécifiée” of merchandise for the government’s use (for negotiations with Cree and Dakota). Days later, on 7 April, the President of the Government addressed the citizens of the “North and the Northwest: “CONCITOYENS/FELLOW COUNTRY MEN!” Riel paid tribute to the power of the public will, “Reconnu par toutes les classes du peuple, le gouvernement repose sur la bonne volonté et l’union des citoyens.”<sup>231</sup> This was printed in multiple newspapers in English and French and circulated by Catholic missionaries as a broadsheet.

### 3.9 Violence in the Public Sphere

Despite the official communications about peace and order, Métis authority continued to be challenged. On 14 February an armed group invaded the house of Henri Coutu hoping to catch Riel there. Then in late February, Hugh Sutherland and Nibert Parisien were killed because a violent mob of Canadians had seized Parisien as a spy. Days later, a large party of men who foolishly marched past Fort Garry after manifesting their hostility to the Provisional Government were seized by the Métis. The Métis National Committee, including Riel, held four men responsible and were determined to reassert order in the settlement through a court martial.<sup>232</sup> Riel was approached by a number of people who asked him to commute the sentence. Women were strategically present again, Mrs. Bannatyne (who had beat Mair), Mrs. MacTavish, Mrs. Sutherland, and the “determined” Miss MacVicar. Riel pardoned three of the four, but refused to pardon the leader Major Boulton. According Mrs. W. R. Black’s memoir, Riel replied to Sutherland’s entreaties, “I hold him accountable for the death of your son, the first bloodshed

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<sup>231</sup> This large broadsheet printed in English and French was sent to numerous newspapers. Docs. #1-051 & 1-052 in Riel, *CWLR*, 74–79. See also *Le Nouveau Monde*, 13 April 1870, *Le Courrier* (St-Hyacinthe), 17 April 1870, *Le New Nation* (Winnipeg), 15 April 1870, and the *Daily Press* (St. Paul), 7 May 1870. A printed copy of the address can be found in Archbishop Taché’s archives with a note “circulaire.” Alexander Begg mentions the circulation of this address in his journal. See Morton, *Alexander Begg’s Red River Journal: and other papers relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1956), 351, note 2. See also Bruce Peel, *Early Printing in the Red River Settlement 1859-1870*, 32.

<sup>232</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 104–9.

since the resistance to my government began, and he must pay the penalty. A life for a life! He is guilty of the death of a man born on the soil of this country and he must die for it!”<sup>233</sup> But when one of the ladies begged him on her knees he was embarrassed. Begg writes, “when she entered the room where Riel was[,] evidently having made up her mind for a scene[,] threw herself on her knees crying, Mercy! Mercy! Mercy!—Everybody except the Lady herself was disgusted.”<sup>234</sup> According to another memoir, “Riel stopped his pacing up and down, and resting against the end of the table, covered his face with his hands. At last he said, ‘Mrs. Sutherland, that alone has saved him. I give you Boulton’s life!’”<sup>235</sup> Whether Riel shared Begg’s assessment or not, he did grant her wish. It is important to note that such discretionary mercy reinforced the relationship of gender to the power structure. However, such discretion could not be taken too far as he was facing increasing pressure from the Métis to carry out justice. They worried that if mercy was shown too frequently, more violence would happen as the “Canadas” became bolder. However, there was another aspect of political brinkmanship, as Donald Smith revealed in a letter to Joseph Howe. Riel effectively blackmailed Smith into using his influence with the English inhabitants to convince them to join the French in forming a government.<sup>236</sup> Smith in turn, used it as an excuse to explain why he had supported Riel’s government. He reported their conversation,

I reasoned with him long and earnestly, until at length, about 10 o’clock, he yielded, and addressing me apparently with much feeling, said “Hitherto I have been deaf to all entreaties, and in now granting you this man’s life (or words to that effect) may I ask you a favour?” “Anything” I replied... He continued, “Canada has disunited us, will you use your influence to reunite us. You can do so, and without this it will be war, bloody civil war... If you can do this, war will be avoided; not only the lives but the liberty of all the prisoners will be secured, for on your success depend the lives of all the Canadians in the Settlement.”

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<sup>233</sup> Healy, *Women of Red River*, 226-7.

<sup>234</sup> Begg, *Red River Journal*, February 20, 1870, MG 29, C1, Library and Archives Canada. According to Begg, Miss MacVicar was the supplicant, although the memoir cited above suggests it was Mrs. Sutherland the mother of Hugh.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> “Donald Smith to Joseph Howe, 28 April 1870,” published in *Toronto Globe*, 29 April 1870, 4.



Riel knew well that Smith had been bribing others in order to break up the fragile political union.<sup>237</sup> This had caused him considerable frustration; by agreeing to spare Bolton's life he gained another ally. For Smith it was a way to excuse his caving to Riel's wishes and present himself as the mater of a situation in which he actually had little influence.

Riel justified his position to his supporters by pointing to the feminine appeals, and using "family" as a moral compass. However, many of the soldiers were now restless and unwilling to continue acting as virtuous guardians of disrespectful Canadians. Stanley also points out the important context, as a result of Riel's recent attack of "brain-fever, [...] Riel's men were edgy and unruly, and all the more so when Riel was ill in bed."<sup>238</sup> They lost their patience when one of the prisoners captured outside Fort Garry continued to defy his captors. In 1883, Riel told a reporter from the *Winnipeg Daily Sun* that he had pleaded for Thomas Scott to behave, but Scott replied stubbornly, and stupidly, "I am loyal and you are rebels."<sup>239</sup> Thomas Scott continued to yell obscenities, insult, and laugh at his captors.<sup>240</sup> And the Métis guards knew that Scott had been involved with the killing of Parisien. Some may have suspected that he was a form of "*wihktigoo*," a murderous, infectious force in Ojibwe spirituality.<sup>241</sup> They were on the verge of killing Scott with or without a court martial when Riel intervened. Through a formal order, the execution became part of maintaining discipline amongst his soldiers and public order. By stepping into the role of authority Riel had promised to uphold the peace, so now his leadership

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<sup>237</sup> For a fuller discussion of Smith's work behind the scenes, see Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 82-99.

<sup>238</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 111.

<sup>239</sup> Quoted in J. M. Bumsted, "Why Shoot Thomas Scott? A Study in Historical Evidence," in *Thomas Scott's Body: And Other Essays on Early Manitoba History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000), 201.

<sup>240</sup> "Donald Smith to Joseph Howe, 28 April 1870."

<sup>241</sup> Norma Jean Hall suggests that Scott's execution stemmed from an Ojibwe concept of social justice: "The nature of the traditions surrounding Scott—from Aboriginal to non-Aboriginal sources—suggests that some, if not most, of the inhabitants of Red River considered him to be a form of "*wihktigoo*": a murderous, infectious force, which once loosed within a community, was dedicated to its physical extermination." Norma Jean Hall, "'Perfect Freedom': Red River as a Settler Society, 1810-1870" (MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 2003), 158.

credentials were on the line. Yet, as Bumsted points out, he could have done the same thing with Boulton. Riel's legitimacy was only part of the story. Thomas Scott had no relations, Riel called him a "stranger," and, without a mother, sister, wife or children to keep him in check, he was, according to Métis ideas of governance, a threat to the community.<sup>242</sup> Lacking feminine relations, Scott's violence could not be checked by kinship ties.

Historians have focused too much on the "mistake" of executing Thomas Scott.<sup>243</sup> Certainly, it allowed the English press to demonize Riel and likely contributed to his own execution in 1885.<sup>244</sup> To this day even, Riel's decision to allow the killing continues to cause confusion and anxiety for a Canadian historical memory that is looking for "law and order."<sup>245</sup> He was not however performing for the Canadian, but for the Red River public. There are two points to make here, first, this logic is informed by the false truth of hindsight and the framework of justice later imposed by the the settler state. If Riel had allowed Scott to go free the consequences could have been more dire. As a resolution to the growing problem of disorder, represented by two deaths in the settlement due to political violence, it was effective. The second point is that "law and order" are only ever ensured by the threat of violence. The authority of the Red River public sphere, as all other publics, is a result of a constant tension between violence

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<sup>242</sup> Morton called him "an obscure man," *Begg's Red River Journal*, 109. 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), 3–10.

<sup>243</sup> According to Stanley, "By one unfortunate error of judgment—this is what the execution of Scott amounted to—and by one unnecessary deed of bloodshed—for the Provisional Government was an accomplished fact—Louis Riel set his foot upon the path which led not to glory but to the gibbet." *Louis Riel*, 117. I believe that Bumsted is much closer to the truth when he concludes that Scott may have been executed because he was unknown, but for different reasons. "Why Shoot Thomas Scott? A Study in Historical Evidence," 197–209.

<sup>244</sup> Lyle Dick, "Nationalism and Visual Media in Canada: The Case of Thomas Scott's Execution," *Manitoba History* 48 (Autumn/Winter 2004): 2–13.

<sup>245</sup> Images of the execution of Thomas Scott are still used in Canadian History textbooks, and questions about the execution of Scott are still used to defend post-revisionist historiography. *Ibid.*

from below and above, maintaining that tension and balance is what makes the public sphere possible.

Scott was undoubtedly executed for political reasons. “We must make Canada respect us,” said Riel to Donald Smith.<sup>246</sup> Yet Indigenous principles behind justice and governance cannot be discounted. It should be noted that in his comment to Smith, Riel undoubtedly meant the “Canada Party” in Red River rather than the government in Ottawa. Riel knew the implications of the execution could be dire, and did not make much fanfare of it in the press, but it was necessary for dampening public enthusiasm. The execution of Scott was only briefly mentioned in the *New Nation* and was reported with the great regret of the Provisional Government.<sup>247</sup> This warning was to be transmitted through the informal channels where its lesson would be more effective.

With the arrival of a Canadian military force, the argument for the sovereignty of the people became moot. In the meantime, however, the resistance and accommodation that Riel created through his actions in the public sphere in 1869-70 reveals the complexity and nuance of the history of the public sphere in Canada.

## **Conclusion**

Educated in Montreal, Riel had observed and participated in the public sphere of Lower Canada. He also knew the public sphere of Red River. Simultaneously speaking to Canadian and Métis worlds enabled him to mount a powerful critique of settler legitimacy, which justified its actions as the efforts of “civilization” and “loyalty”. On 15 May 1870, Riel threw the words of the “loyalists” back in the teeth of the Canadian newspapers

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<sup>246</sup> “Donald Smith to Joseph Howe, 28 April 1870.”

<sup>247</sup> “Military Execution,” *New Nation*, 4 March 1870, 3.

Pleins de confiance en ces principes qui font notre force, nous ne voulons pas qu'ils soient sujets loyaux de sa Majesté la Reine d'Angleterre ceux qui ont voulu nous faire la guerre jusqu'ici, et qui voudraient encore nous la faire à cause de la conduite que nous avons tenue sur ces résolutions. Pour nous ruiner, et afin de s'élever sur nos ruines, ils nous ont toujours comptés au rang des barbares. Cependant nos grandes difficultés ne nous ont jamais fait appeler à notre secours le dangereux élément des tribus sauvages. Au contraire, tandis que nous n'épargnons rien pour les maintenir dans le calme, eux autres viennent d'envoyer à travers notre pays où leur gouvernement n'a pas de juridiction, des émissaires dans le but criminel de nous créer des ennemis parmi les Indiens. Mais nous espérons que la Province nous aidera à compléter la pacification du Nord-Ouest; nous espérons que l'autorité de la couronne d'Angleterre facilitera le dénouement des grands complications qui ont été causée par une grande imprudence Politique.<sup>248</sup>

Riel drew out the rhetoric of a binary between civilization and savage by contrasting Canada's efforts to ruin them as "barbarians," with their criminal efforts to make the "Indians" their enemy. It was an incoherent argument. This reinforced his point that it made no sense to deny that Indigenous peoples could not also be part of a peaceful British North America. It was imprudent of Canada to call them "savages." In the Canadian newspapers, Riel claimed that the Métis were the means of facilitating Canada's jurisdiction and authority. This was not just resistance, but negotiation, and consensus building. The "Protestation des Peuples du Nord-Ouest" was later reported in the papers of Ontario and Quebec, which also carried a letter from Louis Schmidt, the secretary of the Provisional Government.<sup>249</sup> That someone like Louis Riel could, in 1869, employ the new mediums and forms was a sharp rebuke to the non-Indigenous pretense, formed by unprepared politicians from Ottawa, that this was "empty" land waiting for civilization.

As a participant with recognized legitimacy in both worlds, Riel mediated Canada's colonization of the northwest. Riel recognized the forces of change, (according to Stanley,

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<sup>248</sup> "Protestation des Peuples du Nord-Ouest," doc. #1-060 in CWLR, 89–93.

<sup>249</sup> This proclamation was partially printed and summarized in the *Globe*, 22 June 1870, (translated), *Journal de Québec*, 23 June 1870 and *Courrier de St Hyacinthe*, 28 June 1870. These publications are not mentioned in the CWLR.

“overwhelming white immigration and a competitive nineteenth-century civilization”) and responded to them by showing the world that the Métis were civilized and would be agents of their own history. The transformation of the Indigenous public sphere ought to be placed within a broader narrative of settler colonialism—one that included accommodation, resistance, and, ultimately, dispossession. Wary of the paternalism towards Indigenous peoples inherent in European and Canadian discourses regarding “opinion,” Riel was careful with the idiom. Yet, he was complicit in the transfer of authority from Indigenous ideas around kinship to a nebulous but more universal social identity that could serve as an umbrella for a much larger political community. The term “people” became a rallying point and he employed the idiom of “public will.”<sup>250</sup> By gathering the public will around the ideas of loyalty and the rights of the people to the soil, Riel constructed the consent necessary to create political responsibility towards a broader political community. This process is what historian Harold Mah calls a “phantasmic reshaping of social identity.”<sup>251</sup> As Mah argues, the “presumption of equality presupposes that individuals seem in a fundamental sense undifferentiated or unmarked by acquired traits of wealth, status, or membership in groups.” The presumption of a universal identity is what allows the idea of universal access to the public sphere.<sup>252</sup> The key to Riel’s success was his ability to put aside the differences and to perform *as if* there was a unified whole.

Colonists, expecting a chaotic and lawless frontier, could not understand Riel’s work and only saw him as a petty dictator, a caricature that has proven to be longlived. These caricatures have allowed historians to dismiss the novelty and creativity of Riel’s political ideas. The Métis,

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<sup>250</sup> He likely squared the Rousseauian peg with the Catholic circle by drawing upon nationalist discourse present in Lower Canada. Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire Sociale des Idées au Québec* (Saint-Laurent, Québec: Fides, 2000).

<sup>251</sup> Harold Mah, “Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians,” *The Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 1 (March 2000): 164.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 165–66.

by contrast, found in Riel a spokesperson who was able to show to the world that the Red River community would not be overawed and cowed.

The next chapter examines how Riel responded to the violent invasion of Red River by Canadian troops. He would return to Montreal to contest the injustice of Canadian occupation and protest the suspension of law and order. It illustrates Riel's remarkable networking skills within the Canadian metropolis and his continued versatility in moving between worlds.

## Chapter 4

### **The Amnesty Campaign: A network approach to Confederation**

In the previous chapter Riel argued that it was a mistake to assume that the Métis could not claim title to the land of Red River and the full political rights of British subjects. The Bill of Rights and the negotiations that led to the Manitoba Act were a reflection of the persuasiveness of this argument, now his task was to present that understanding to the Canadian public. The following chapter examines what is called the amnesty issue of 1872-5, or the “First Riel” issue. During this period, Louis Riel, aged 28-30, participated in creating a social movement in support of his own and the Métis nation’s liberty. Riel moved between Montreal and Red River, forging a network which could pressure the Canadian government to grant amnesty to the Métis for the events of 1869-70. Riel’s own writing, in the context of a more extended network, raises questions about individual agency in social movements and reflects on the absence of Riel (or his resistance) in the history of Confederation. What becomes clear is that Riel understood that a network linking Montreal to the Northwest was the key to the Canadian Confederation and embedded himself within it. Riel’s successful agitation illustrates how an Indigenous person could exploit the new political horizons that Confederation offered. To put it more dramatically, Riel, at least temporarily, hijacked the Confederation project. Ultimately however, as will be argued, his efforts to seize this opportunity were unsustainable in a political nexus increasingly defined by ideas of cultural difference.

The amnesty issue was a major public relations battle that shook Confederation to its core. The main points can be briefly summarized. When the Métis negotiated with Canada regarding Confederation and the formation of the province of Manitoba, they believed that

Amnesty for the Provisional Government had been promised by officials in Ottawa or London. However, in the years following the “troubles” of 1869-70, discussed in Chapter Three, a vocal group of people called upon the government to punish the leading Métis involved in the political resistance to Canada’s annexation of the Northwest. These “Canada Firsters,” as they were called, incensed by the “murder” of Thomas Scott, demanded the arrest and trial of Ambroise Lepine and Louis Riel.<sup>1</sup> In September 1873 a warrant for the arrest of Lepine and Riel was signed in Winnipeg. Lepine was captured, but Riel escaped. Across Canada loud voices, both in support and against this turn of events, called for justice. At the trial in 1874, Lepine was found guilty and sentenced to death. The Governor General Lord Dufferin eventually commuted the sentence, and the Canadian government granted a general amnesty with an exceptional condition of a five-year exile for Riel and Lepine.

While this history is well known, what has not been sufficiently discussed is the centrality of Riel’s own networking and writing. In 1872-74 Confederation was still a fresh idea, a vision that seemed to offer opportunity because it drew together a vast territory into one political system. Rather than resisting it, Riel participated in the new political imaginary, or, at the very least, he was negotiating the horizons of the newly confederated community that was Canada. Riel intentionally forged relationships that would allow him access to the Catholic networks already in place in Montreal. Sociability and networking, through written correspondence and social visits, were key to political careers.<sup>2</sup> Like other political leaders active

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<sup>1</sup> 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), 3–10; Lyle Dick, “Nationalism and Visual Media in Canada: The Case of Thomas Scott’s Execution,” *Manitoba History* 48 (Autumn/Winter 2004): 2–18. Carl Berger, *A Sense of Power: Studies in the Idea of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 48–77.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of transnational political careerism see David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds., *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careerism in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For a study of the importance of correspondence and social visits in Upper and Lower Canada see



in Montreal, such as George-Étienne Cartier for French-Canadians, Thomas D'arcy McGee for the Irish, or Alexander Tilloch Galt for land speculators and railroad investors, Riel was well aware of the importance of using public pressure and social networking to defend the rights and claims of his constituency. Understanding this system of politics, defined as “clientelist” by Elsbeth Heaman, where “identity brokerage” was translated into practical power, was critical for political success in mid-nineteenth century Canada.<sup>3</sup> As we will see, Riel’s politics were modelled on a pattern already established by Joseph Howe.

The centerpiece of this chapter is an 1874 pamphlet written by Riel, *L’Amnistie: Mémoire sur les causes des troubles du Nord-Ouest et sur les négociations qui ont amené leur règlement amiable*. In this pamphlet he defended the Métis government’s actions and argued that Amnesty was the *sine qua non* of entry into Confederation. Connecting this text to a larger web of letters and newspapers illustrates the context which caused Riel to write this text, the process by which it was published, and its influence on Montreal’s public opinion. This chapter also revisits Riel’s involvement in an American annexation movement during this period. The “Memorial of the people of Rupert’s land” was republished by George Stanley in the *Canadian Historical Review* in 1939,<sup>4</sup> who argued it was written by Riel. New archival evidence from the Minnesota Historical Association shows that Riel did not write it. Linked to a broader discussion of his resistance to the Fenian Invasion of 1872, this discovery illustrates how Riel, conscious of the political implications, was carefully managing his public relationships especially with Americans.

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Françoise Noël, *Family Life and Sociability in Upper and Lower Canada, 1780-1870: A View from Diaries and Family Correspondence* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Elsbeth Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government: A New Political History of Canada 1867-1917*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017), 336–38.

<sup>4</sup> G.F.G. Stanley, “Riel’s Petition to the President of the United States, 1870,” *Canadian Historical Review* 20, no. 4 (December 1939): 422–38.

Riel came, or was pulled, to Montreal, rather than Quebec, Toronto, or Ottawa because it occupied a metropolitan position in the project of Confederation and was the centre of Catholic and Francophone networks. Here, in this hub, or *plaque-tournante*, connections to socially and politically active networks were made with a speed and intensity unlike those generated in the frontier. Like other Indigenous subjects of the British Empire who travelled to imperial metropolises to influence public discourse,<sup>5</sup> Riel's public statement was formulated and informed by other discourses already present. A nationalist movement informed by Ultramontane Catholic conservative ideologies surrounding language, religion, emigration, and education rights took up his cause.<sup>6</sup> The term "ultramontane," born in the context of European Catholic churches seeking to protect their independence from nation states, was a religious response to nationalism ("over the mountains" i.e. looking to Rome), however in Quebec, the movement attempted to bolster national identity.<sup>7</sup> Riel received active public and private support from key figures in the ultramontane movement like Alphonse Desjardins, the editor of the *Nouveau Monde*, and Ignace Bourget, the bishop of Montreal.<sup>8</sup> The Bishop of Sainte Boniface, Alexandre-Antonin Taché, and his brother Joseph-Charles Taché, a Montreal politician and polymath, were also important advocates of ultramontane and French nationalist principles. These associations linked Riel to a

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<sup>5</sup> For instance Celia Haig-Brown, "The 'Friends' of Nahnebahwequa," in *With Good Intentions Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada*, edited by David A Nock (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 132–57.

<sup>6</sup> Historians Philippe Sylvain, and Nadia F. Eid have described the ideological and political nature of the ultramontane movement. Nive Voisine and Jean Hamelin, eds., *Les Ultramontains Canadien-Français* (Montreal: Boréal, 1985). Nadia F. Eid, *Le Clergé et Le Pouvoir Politique au Québec. Une analyse de l'idéologie ultramontaine au milieu du XIXe siècle* (Montreal: Hurtubise, 1978); Philippe Sylvain, "Quelques Aspects de L'antagonisme Libéral-Ultramontain Au Canada Français," in *Les Idéologies Québécois au 19e Siècle*, ed. Jean-Paul Bernard (Montreal: Boréal, 1973). For ultramontane "rights talk" see Elsbeth Heaman, "Rights Talk and the Liberal Order Framework," in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Michel Ducharme and Jean-François Constant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Monet, "French Canadian Nationalism and the Challenge of Ultramontanism," *Canadian Historical Association: Historical Papers* 1, no. 1 (1966): 41–55; Roberto Perin, "French-Speaking Canada From 1840," in *A Concise History of Christianity in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1996), 190–260. Arthur Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Roberto Perin, *Ignace de Montréal: artisan d'une identité nationale* (Montreal: Boréal, 2008);

nationalist organization that had launched a successful campaign to recruit and equip Zouaves volunteers to fight in Rome between 1868 and 1870. As will be argued, similar strategies were used to mobilize public opinion in the campaign to request amnesty for Riel and Lepine.

In the first half of the 1870s Riel was at the height of his career. He drew together diverse worlds (Métis, French Canadian, American, and British). Riel's *Memoire* published in 1874, made the cause of the Northwest a significant matter of French-Canadian public concern long before 1885. It is important to draw out the distinctions between the first half and the second half of his life. In the 1870s Confederation seemed to offer an opportunity to the Métis because it made possible an alliance with the French Catholic population in Quebec. It was not a question of manipulation of the one by the other, but rather more akin to the smashing together of particles in a burst of energy that would create fireworks for Canadian politics for generations to come. By the end of this period the increasingly racialized space of post-Confederation British North America would narrow Riel's options. Some had already begun to deny Riel's links to Montreal. Riel had been to the right school, mastered the Latin, had the bearing of a professional statesman, and had proven that he had the confidence of his fellows, but, in 1876, Riel was in the asylum in Longue Pointe and was treated as insane. In 1885, he would be executed as a traitor and the only imaginable defense for the French-Canadian lawyers was insanity. In a society that no longer wanted to remember the ties with the Northwest the genius of Riel's networking was impossible to understand. The French-Canadian elite consoled themselves by speaking of the insanity of the "pauvre Riel" and protesting his execution as a symptom of Protestant and Anglophone oppression.

## **Networks and Confederation**

The social networks studied in this chapter, assemblages of social and cultural techniques, were part of the regime of power that constituted the project of Canada. The goal, therefore, is to understand the role that these networks played in shaping the technical, historical and cultural practices of occupying space. The organizing principle of this chapter is that Confederation was a political structure to enable networking. This structure would ease the flow of social, political, and economic capital.<sup>9</sup>

Harold Innis once posited that “Empire is about means of communication.” As he further argued the use of a specific medium over long periods of time would determine the character of knowledge.<sup>10</sup> As Jodi Berland has neatly argued, Innis’ critique of monopolies of knowledge formation opens the door for reading “cultural technologies” as part of empire, or the occupation of space.<sup>11</sup> This is key to arguments about knowledge and empire more broadly.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the work of Allan Lester, John Darwin, Zoe Laidlaw and John Pocock shows, in an unrecognized confirmation of Innis’ argument, that long distance communication shapes culture and discourse differently.<sup>13</sup> The network approach, which implicitly undermines the metropole-periphery framework, highlights the multiple meanings, projects, materials, and experiences that constitute the process of colonization. This, as Elizabeth Elbourne has argued, provides an opportunity to

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<sup>9</sup> Capital can be defined as the product of a series of exchanges (thus labour) which are oriented towards the maximization of profit. Bourdieu insists that material (economic) capital must be understood as constituted by and defined by non-material (symbolic/cultural) capital and vice-versa. Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John Richardson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), 242–58.

<sup>10</sup> Innis, *Empire and Communications* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950).

<sup>11</sup> Jody Berland, *North of Empire: Essays on the Cultural Technologies of Space* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Tony Ballantyne, “Colonial Knowledge,” in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 177–197.

<sup>13</sup> John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815–45: Patronage, the Information Revolution and Colonial Government*, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001).

re-inject the agency of Indigenous subjects into older narratives.<sup>14</sup> Placing Riel's career into a networked story of Confederation, rather than a metropole-periphery framework, immediately explains how he was able to forge cross-cutting ties of intimacy and run athwart the lines of Empire.<sup>15</sup>

Riel understood social networks: Métis relations governed by *wakhootowin* were founded upon social relations. *Wakhootowin* provided Riel with a framework to understand the power at the heart of kinship and community relations that operated in Canadian politics and society, such as those studied by Noel Francis.<sup>16</sup> Riel also recognized the importance of the more formal and institutional relationships formed through print media and political appointments. He operated on both levels without contradiction.<sup>17</sup> This was essential for success. As Brian Young shows in his recent study of the Taschereau and McCord families, "reputation, trust, and the capacity for male 'friendship' implied a combination of social class, literary and networking skills and broad scientific cultural knowledge."<sup>18</sup>

Riel worked hard to forge networks, but these networks were only possible because of his privileged education and family connections. Participation in a network can be viewed as a form of labour that requires specific competencies, such as knowledge of genealogical relationships,

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<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Elbourne, "Indigenous People and Imperial Networks: Politics of Knowledge," in *Rediscovering the British World*, ed. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006), 59-85.

<sup>15</sup> A critique echoed in Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Metropole and Colony," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Fredrick Cooper and Ann Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-38.

<sup>16</sup> Noël, *Family Life and Sociability in Upper and Lower Canada, 1780-1870*. See also Dominique Marshall, "Nationalisme et politiques sociales au Québec depuis 1867: un siècle de rendez-vous manqué entre l'État, l'Église et les familles," *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, 9, no. 2 (1994): 301-347.

<sup>17</sup> For an exposition of this point see Sherry Olson's study of the hotelier Bartholomew O'Brien. Sherry Olson, "Silver and Hotcakes and Beer," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 45, no. 1-2 (2013): 179-201. This article breaks down the separation between Ferdinand Tönnies's tidy models of *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*, the former a market economy and the latter a gift economy, to show that leaders within the Irish community frequently juggled values between the two.

<sup>18</sup> Brian Young, *Patrician Families and the Making of Quebec: The Taschereaus and McCords* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 204.

education, religious practices and beliefs. Pierre Bourdieu would call this labour the production of “social capital.”<sup>19</sup> Bourdieu’s notion of social capital proves useful to understand the dynamics of Riel’s network formation. Social capital allows us to query the production of society. This provides the means to theorize how lines of communication, which seem to lack a logic, are important to the production of power and to measure the network’s efficacy.<sup>20</sup>

The networks of people supporting Riel were composed of surprisingly unclear party lines. Liberal nationalists and conservative Catholics were both defending the Métis. For instance, Chapleau and Mercier, men from opposite ends of the political spectrum, both expressed their sympathies for Riel. Bishop Laflèche and Joseph Tassé, both committed ultramontanes, would condemn Riel as a heretic and madman in 1885, but their support for Riel’s movement in 1874 was crucial. In Quebec the more liberal Archbishop Elzéar Taschereau was cautious, while Bourget wrote Riel several letters of support.<sup>21</sup>

Part of the lack of clarity lies in the fact that the ultramontane critique was combined with the rise of nationalism.<sup>22</sup> Nationalism and ultramontanism converged in their revolt against the de-humanizing effects of liberalism. The Catholic church became a primary vehicle for insulating “society” from the sense of fragmentation, but as Michael Behrent points out was part of a much broader critique of social breakdown.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Riel’s networking was undertaken in a context where the effect of liberalism upon society was a central preoccupation of nineteenth century theorists and social architects, who elaborated the concept of “society” in an effort to

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<sup>19</sup> Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” 248.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> The opposition between the two prelates is well known, however, one should be conscious of reducing Taschereau’s accomplishments to internecine strife. Young, *Patrician Families and the Making of Quebec*, 277.

<sup>22</sup> Monet, “French Canadian Nationalism and the Challenge of Ultramontanism.”

<sup>23</sup> Behrent explores the overlap between the religious and sociologists critique that “republicanism required a far denser conception of society than that which could be elicited from the social contract or individual rights alone.” See, “The Mystical Body of Society: Religion and Association in Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought.” *History of Ideas* 69, no. 2 (April 2008): 219–43.

understand the changes sweeping across the globe.<sup>24</sup> The re-conceptualization of that society and how it worked was part of the experimentation in political government during this period.<sup>25</sup> The Bishop of Trois Rivières Louis-François Laflèche, in his articles on civil society, pointed out the dangers of J.J. Rousseau's *Social Contract*, by reminding his readers "la société religieuse ou l'Eglise, est la première de toutes les sociétés."<sup>26</sup> The practical force of the theories espoused by Laflèche were worked out on the streets of Montreal, where in the second half of the nineteenth century the authority of the Catholic church would become increasingly preponderant.<sup>27</sup>

Above all, the associations Riel forged were a means to bring certain facts before the Canadian public. As Elsbeth Heaman notes, "Facts require social networks to exist. They transform those social networks as they make their way in the world, and the most important facts require the broadest networks."<sup>28</sup> This is the "logic" which explains Riel's networking. Confederation was a "practicing of space," to use Doreen Massey's term, and it made networks possible.<sup>29</sup> By tapping into this network, Riel sought to hijack the Canadian Confederation

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<sup>24</sup> Here I am thinking of the work of Georg Simmel "How is Society Possible?" and Emile Durkheim *The Rules of the Sociological Method*. Fecteau defined the emergence of "the social" as a result of a dynamic problematization of human collectives: "Le social procède d'une dynamique de problématisation des collectifs humains issue de la rencontre difficile et parfois contradictoire du capitalisme et de la démocratie." "La Dynamique Sociale du Catholicisme Québécois au XIXe Siècle : éléments pour une réflexion sur les frontières et les conditions historiques de possibilité du « Social », " *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 35, no. 70 (2002): 495–515.

<sup>25</sup> For discussions of the developments in nineteenth-century experimental social science see Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840-1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Bruce Curtis, *Ruling by Schooling Quebec: Conquest to Liberal Governmentality - A Historical Sociology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government*.

<sup>26</sup> Laflèche published these article between June 1865 and May 1866 in the *Journal de Trois Rivières*. They were reprinted as L.-F. Laflèche, *Quelques Considerations sur les rapports de la société civil avec la religion et la famille* (Montreal: E. Senecal, 1866), 122.

<sup>27</sup> The terms and impact of the religious revival and the Catholic domination of Quebec society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been the source of considerable academic debate. Louis Rousseau, 'À Propos du 'réveil religieux' dans le Québec du XIXe siècle: où se loge le vrai débat?' *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française*, vol. 49, no. 2 (1995): 223-245. René Hardy, "À propos du réveil religieux dans le Québec du XIX siècle : le recours aux tribunaux dans les rapports entre le clergé et les fidèles (district de Trois-Rivières)," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 48, no. 2 (1994): 187.

<sup>28</sup> Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government*, 464.

<sup>29</sup> See David Lambert and Alan Lester, "Imperial Spaces, Imperial Subjects," in *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15.



project and use it to defend the rights and interests of the Métis in the new Northwest territories. It is important to stress the voluntary nature of Riel's networking because networks do more than simply connect different places. Rather they occupy and "make" space. Confederation, understood as a web, was superimposed on a territory.<sup>30</sup> It lay overtop numerous other local networks that were transformed in the process. It was also about cutting ties and disrupting networks; indeed, Confederation would prove highly destructive to Indigenous forms of association.

The history of political patronage and the links to business capital are foundational to Canadian historiography. Networks created to build railways and canals have long been recognized as being at the heart of the history of the state.<sup>31</sup> The "cultural technologies," to borrow Jodi Berland's phrase again, of the bank loans and land surveys allow us to tell the settler history of Confederation because they were preserved in the construction of a modern capitalist system.<sup>32</sup> For a variety of reasons Indigenous peoples were increasingly marginalized from this system. As result the "silence" of Indigenous Peoples with respect to Confederation is no great surprise.<sup>33</sup> However, this study of Riel suggests that the Métis and Indigenous peoples did

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<sup>30</sup> Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Gerald Tulchinsky, *The River Barons: Montreal Businessmen and the Growth of Industry and Transportation, 1837-53* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); Brian Young, *Promoters and Politicians: The North-Shore Railways in the History of Quebec, 1854-85* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978). Don Nerbas's recent book tells of the reckoning of and the genesis of a new logic for, the relationship between big business and politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *Dominion of Capital: The Politics of Big Business and the Crisis of the Canadian Bourgeoisie 1914-1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Antoinette M. Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women, Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 140-41. Similarly, Robert Sweeney speaks of "historical logic" as the quality of a source that goes beyond the simplistic idea of "bias." Robert Sweeney, *Why Did We Choose to Industrialize?* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 30.

<sup>33</sup> "What do you do with silence?" asks Brian Gettler, "Recolonizing Confederation: Indigenous Policy and the Making of Canada," *The Other 60s: A Decade that Shaped Canada and the World*, University of Toronto, 22 April 2017. In his review of Haefli and Sweeney's *Captors and Captives* (2003) Brett Rushforth notes the difficulties entailed with dealing with a dearth of sources in attempting to tell any colonial history from multiple perspectives, "O Brother, Where Art Thou," *Reviews in American History* 32, no. 2 (2004): 151-158.



understand, respond to, and plan for their future in a confederated Canada, but their thoughts and words have not been as well preserved in historical archives. This archival gap has much to do with the nature of the “capital” they held. Riel moved through Montreal, making friends, establishing contacts and creating political pressure with very little cash. Therefore, he left fewer “accounts.” Instead, he relied upon social capital and, while there are traces of these transactions, reconstructing his network is less straightforward than the accounts of the capitalist organizations that leave us such a compelling history of the state.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, because he “ran across and athwart state-archived paper trails,”<sup>35</sup> Riel has left us an excellent opportunity to learn about how one Indigenous man thought about Confederation.

#### 4.1 Family and Friends

In order to develop the political potential of the Métis nation, Riel endeavoured to put together a network of allies. A recently uncovered letter written by Riel in December 1869 to Eustache Prud’homme, a former classmate at the college, shows how Riel attempted to inspire his friends in Montreal to join this exciting opportunity to create a new province.<sup>36</sup>

Je viens de recevoir ta lettre amicale. Au milieu de mes nouvelles occupations, malgré le peu de temps dont je peux disposer même le nuit, je t’assure que j’ai lu, relu ce que tu m’as écrit. Cher ami, Voilà! Ici tout marche! tout marche! J’ai saisi le moment favorable. ... Je ne puis pas te dire: viens ici tu feras de l’argent. Mais voici. Nous avons besoin de gens instruits, d’honnêtes personnes! Nous manquons de personnes instruites parmi la population Métis[!] Canadienne Française. Viens si tu veux!... Et toi en venant ici, tu rendras au pays à la cause du

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<sup>34</sup> Archives are grounded in certain places, but letters cross space, newspapers circulate broadly, and people travel to markets—all of this challenges attempts to “settle” or fix knowledge in place. For a recent extended theoretical engagement with this process see Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> See also Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Louis Riel, “Letter, 1869 Dec. 14, Fort Garry [to] Eustache Prud’homme, Montreal,” University of Alberta, Peel’s Prairie Provinces #7436. See also Thomas Flanagan and Glen Campbell, “Newly Discovered Writings of Louis Riel,” in *Metis in Canada: History, Identity, Law and Politics*, ed. Christopher Adams, Greg Dahl, and Ian Peach (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2013), 249–76.

Bas-Canada un grande service. Ah! Si Monsieur Cartier eut fait plutôt attention aux insinuations de ma faible voix!...Il est peut-être encore temps!...

Come west! Riel seems to say. He could not promise riches, but it would do a great service to the country. The disappointment that Cartier had not listened to him explains the poems that he sent to the Lower Canadian premier in 1865.

The letter to Prud'homme, is but one example of a rich correspondence that Riel maintained long after leaving Montreal. Riel emphasizes that the Métis are a branch of the French-Canadian race and he writes: "Tout ce que je sais, c'est qu'avant tout Je suis Canadien-Français! Et cela peut montrer la direction de mes idées et de mes sentiments." While he may have been making a literary allusion to "Avant tout je suis Canadien" a popular song for the patriots in the 1830s, and famously sung by Cartier in 1835 at a St. Jean-Baptist banquet, he was also declaring his loyalties. The future of the "Canadiens-Français" like Prud'homme, Riel emphasizes, is in the Northwest and in 1869 he could speak realistically to his fellows (if not to Cartier) about the future he saw in Confederation.

Eustache Prud'homme and Riel were close friends at the college. As Chapter One shows, he wrote a review of Riel's poetry for *L'Opinion Publique* in February 1870, and carried out a long-term correspondence with Riel.<sup>37</sup> These personal relationships established at the college were the foundation of Riel's political network. As Adele Perry argues these intimate associations forged in an earlier era of colonization "persisted in a revamped colonial order," and show how "one articulation of empire could be selectively incorporated into new configurations of governance, settlement and rule."<sup>38</sup> While Prud'homme did not come West, another classmate, Joseph Dubuc, did. While younger, and one year below Riel at the college, Dubuc and Riel

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<sup>37</sup> See also "Prud'homme à Riel 12 January 1871" and "10 June 1871" Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #72 & 93 PAM.

<sup>38</sup> Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 153.

shared philosophy classes and were both members of the Academie Française at the same time. Dubuc was a young lawyer and would be Riel's most loyal ally and regular correspondent.

This letter aligns Riel with the ambitions of Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché and others to motivate French Canadians to move to the West.<sup>39</sup> After leaving the college in 1865, Riel attempted to attract the attention of “the lion of Quebec.”<sup>40</sup> As George Stanley has shown Cartier successfully encouraged other young politicians to travel west: Marc Amable Girard, Alphonse LaRivière, and Henry Clarke.<sup>41</sup> Some would become Riel's allies, others his opponents. Another of “Cartier's boys” to travel west was Joseph Royal, also an alumnus from the *Collège de Montreal*, he had attended from 1850-1854. He was involved with the press: he had worked for *La Minerve*, had founded *L'Ordre* in 1858, had been called to save *L'Écho du Cabinet de Lecture Paroissial* from bankruptcy in 1861, and had founded *La Revue Canadienne* in 1864. Royal also founded *Le Nouveau Monde* and became one of the original members of the Zouave committee.<sup>42</sup> Prior to his arrival in Manitoba there is no record of any previous connection with the Riel family; however, Royal's elder sister, Vitaline Royal, had already come to the settlement as a Grey Nun in 1858.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, Riel's sister, Sarah, was the first Métis to join the Grey Nuns in 1865, and so it is likely that Riel knew of the Royal family through his sister. Their later alliance and Royal's support of Riel in the Amnesty movement as well as his link to the Zouave

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<sup>39</sup> Raymond Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface the “Good Fight” and the Illusive Vision* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> Riel's exuberant letter refers to a series of poems that he also sent to Cartier in 1865 after he had left the college. See 4-033, 034 & 035 Louis Riel, *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel: Poetry/Poésie*, ed. George Stanley and Glen Campbell, vol. 4 (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 67–78. Years ago Lionel Groulx challenged the legend that Cartier had concocted the province of Manitoba, see “Mgr Taché” *Action Française*, 1923, 211-23: “ne paraît s'être le moindre soucié de l'avenir de sa race dans les nouveaux territoires.” However, these links suggest that there was collaboration between Cartier and the father of Manitoba. For more on this see Alistair Sweeney, *George-Étienne Cartier: a biography* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); and Brian J. Young, *George-Étienne Cartier: Montreal Bourgeois* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1981).

<sup>41</sup> G.F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1963), 165.

<sup>42</sup> René Hardy, *Les Zouaves. Une Stratégie Du Clergé Québécois Au XIXe Siècle* (Montreal: Boréal, 1980), 63.

<sup>43</sup> Arthur Silver, “Joseph Royal,” *DCB*, states that Royal went west alone, but this is not entirely accurate.

committee proved to be significant. One letter that Riel received in 1869 was from someone who was willing to send Zouaves to fight for the Métis!<sup>44</sup>

Riel's letter to Prud'homme also repeats a complaint that would become common in the Northwest: that Cartier had not done enough to encourage French-Canadian emigration.<sup>45</sup> The Bishop of Ottawa, Joseph-E.-B. Guigues wrote to A. A. Taché on 11 June 1872 criticizing Cartier's efforts: "Partout de bonnes paroles, j'attendrais les effets.----M. Cartier, la, la, la, c'est bon, c'est bon, il faut faire de Manitoba une province française. Les Ontariens sauteront par dessus et gagneront la Saskachewan, la, la, la."<sup>46</sup> Taché agreed with Guigues, as he too was always asking for more personnel.<sup>47</sup> He had more luck when he wrote to the Bishop of Montreal, Ignace Bourget. On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1867, he wrote, "A St Boniface il y a tant de *choses* qui viennent de Montréal que Votre jeune diocean qui fut ici Eveque éprouve le plus[?] reconnaissant comme le plus profond."<sup>48</sup> Yet Taché worried about being made a stranger to the "vénérables seigneurs du Canada."<sup>49</sup> In 1867 Bourget answered his pleas by sending three priests. By 1868, seven of the fifteen priests in Red River were from Montreal, and almost all of the Grey Nuns came from the Montreal House.<sup>50</sup>

Whether coincidental or not, two of the priests that Bourget sent, F.-Xavier Kavanagh, and Joachim Allard, had attended the college with Riel. Kavanagh was described in his obituary in *Les Cloches des Saint Boniface* as "un anneau dans la chaine," a reference to his work linking

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<sup>44</sup> "Charles L. Champagne à Louis Riel, 9 December 1870," and Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #58 PAM.

<sup>45</sup> See for an overview of this history Robert Painchaud, *Un rêve français dans le peuplement de la Prairie* (Saint Boniface: Les Editions des Plaines, 1987).

<sup>46</sup> "Proulx to Taché" 0075 #10472-10475 PAM.

<sup>47</sup> Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, 55, and 97.

<sup>48</sup> For these letters see, 255.109 Nord Ouest/St. Boniface (4) (1860-1875), Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> "Taché à Bourget, Sept 17, 1868," AADM 255.109 Nord Ouest/St. Boniface (4) 1867: 1.

the Northwest to Lower Canada.<sup>51</sup> Whether Riel influenced their decision to come or not has not been recorded, but Kavanagh wrote to Bishop Taché in 1870 that he knew Riel well, too well.<sup>52</sup>

Monseigneur, j'ai trop bien connu le pauvre Louis Riel, pour approuver tout son passé; mais depuis l'arrivé de l'affreux Denis à la Rivière Rouge nous avons été forcés de reconnaître que le bon Dieu se servait de ce rien (Louis Riel) pour faire son oeuvre: c'est une conviction commune aux Réverends Pères et Prêtres de la Colonie. Dans les circonstances présent, un seul mot de Votre Grandeur, Monseigneur peut faudroyer ce pauvre jeune homme; mais le même coup ne manquerait pas de frapper au coeur tous les membres de votre Congrégation en cette calomnie. Pour celui qui est présentement aux pieds de Votre Grandeur, il ne craint rien, car le danger de la mort lui est assez familier depuis plusieurs mois.

Kavanagh's pun ("rien" for Riel) is remarkable. The letter, written just after the execution of Scott, indicates that Riel's reputation amongst the Catholic clerics may have suffered a considerable blow. At the same time, Kavanagh's words can be read as a cautious commendation, as if to say despite the fact that he gave up the calling of a priesthood he was doing remarkable work for the defence of the faith and the Church.

In the years following the Canadian annexation of the Northwest, Riel expanded the volume of his correspondence across the continent. Confederation, as a networked space, allowed British subjects to reimagine this territory in a new way, and Riel quickly grasped the opportunities such a vast network represented. The bonds between Montreal and Red River were forged by lines of communication and as well as travel. One of Riel's greatest assets was his mobility: he moved between Red River, St. Paul, Montreal, Ottawa, and Plattsburgh (to name just a few of the cities he visited in the years 1872-75). In this respect, Riel acted as one of the principal bridgeheads in establishing and maintaining connections in a network that upset the

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<sup>51</sup> "Feu M. L'abbé F.X. Kavanaugh: Ancien Curé de Saint-François-Xavier" *Les Cloches de Saint Boniface*, May 1922, pp. 89-92.

<sup>52</sup> "De Kavanagh à Taché (St. Francois-Xavier) 13 March 1870," Taché Fonds-75 #7198-7202 SHSB.

restrictions of geography, and helped to transform, through a process of imperial “mapping,” what had been the Northwest “frontier” into a province in the Dominion of Canada.<sup>53</sup>

It is also significant that Riel was part of the local Métis network. Frequently this network is invisible because of the undocumented nature of these relations. However, because Riel was moving so frequently, often as an exile, he was forced to rely upon letters to maintain his family relations. We can see the careful attention he paid to maintaining the network and staying in touch in letters such as the one he wrote to his mother Julie Riel on 2 April 1872:

Ma chère Maman,

J’aime à vous dire encore aujourd’hui que je suis bien portant. Hier nous avons vu Messieurs Royal, Delorme de la R[ivière] R[ouge]. Quelle joie pour nous. Mais surtout quelle consolation d’entendre dire que nos familles étaient assez bien. Ecrivez-moi. Donnez-moi des nouvelles. Mes salu[ts] à mes amis. Nanin, Paul, Charles. Monsieur Gervais.

Si vous aviez occasion de voir Mons. Hamelin, n’oubliez pas ma chère tante et tous nos chers amis. Que Mons. Jos. St Germain m’écrive un mot. Je lui ai écrit. Je crains que mes lettres ne soient interceptées. J’ai écrit à Monsieur St. Germain. Nanin. A Ch. Nolin. Et a beaucoup d’autres. Répondez-moi si ces lettres ont été reçues. Adressez toujours à Mons. Louis Demeules. St. Paul. J’ai appris avec peine que Marie avait été malade. Qu’elle fasse attention se ménage un peu. Embrassez, s’il vous pl[âit]...<sup>54</sup>

Even after he had signed the letter he recalled others he had to greet: “Monsieur Lépine est bien et vous salue. Mes respects à Madame Lépine. Rappelez-moi au souvenir de Mons. Sansregret et à tant d’autres qui me sont chers. Si vous écrivez à Soeur Riel....”

During the Resistance, Riel had invested heavily in social capital to draw together a network of Métis interests. Any attempt at colonization would either have to enter this network or break it up. The Canadian government would choose the latter by sending in an armed force

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<sup>53</sup> “Bridgehead” is used in the sense described by Darwin, *The Empire Project*. For “mapping” as part of the imperial project see Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, “Mapping the British World,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 31, no. 2 (May 2003): 1–15.

<sup>54</sup> Riel, doc. #1-126, in *CWLR*, 194–95.

under the command of British Colonel Garnet Joseph Wolseley. His own antipathy towards the Métis was not well disguised. He later wrote “Personally, I was glad that Riel did not come out and surrender, as he at one time said he would for I could not then have hanged him as I might have done had I taken him prisoner when in arms against his sovereign.”<sup>55</sup> As Wolsely lacked either the will or the authority to enforce discipline amongst the Canadian volunteers Red River experienced a campaign of terror by Canadian troops.<sup>56</sup> In the ensuing weeks members of Riel’s government and their supporters were pursued, beaten and killed in an outbreak of lynch law. Although it is impossible to make a clear link between Canadian militia volunteers and the assaults, Elzéar Goulet, François Guillemette, Bob O’Lone, and James Tanner were violently killed in short order. Another council member Andre Nault was beaten and left for dead. Thomas Spence the editor of the *New Nation*, was also attacked. Even Father Kavanaugh was shot at and narrowly escaped.<sup>57</sup> On August 27, Abbé Proulx wrote to the secretary of the Bishop in Montreal Joesph-O. Paré “Le Colonel n’a pas établi la loi martiale, il ne remenait pas le gouvernement provisoire et prier l’autorité civile.”<sup>58</sup> There were reports of sexual assaults on women in the settlement, but as the courts were at the mercy of Canadian public opinion, no trials were held. In

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<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 155.

<sup>56</sup> Later, Wolseley led other imperial expeditions against native uprisings on British Territory, namely the Ashanti on the Gold Coast and the Madhi in the Sudan. O.A. Cooke, “Wolseley, Garnet Joseph,” *DCB*. The jury is still out on Wolseley’s responsibility for the violence in Red River. Lacking the authority to impose martial law, Wolsley was either unwilling or unable to court-martial Canadians for crimes committed against the population. See Dale Gibson, *Law, Life and Governance at Red River: Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, volume 1 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 285. To defend himself Wolseley later wrote “Narrative of the Red River Expedition,” *Travel Adventure and Sport: Blackwood’s Magazine* No. II (New York: William Blackwood and Sons, 1871). This publication was highly prejudiced against the Métis government and clearly attempted to vindicate the British commander who for “political reasons” refused to declare martial law. Apologists, sensitive to his attack on the legitimacy of the Métis government, would deny his having authored the text. For others, like Riel, it justified their suspicions that the commander had allowed illegal acts of vengeance.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 160–61. Gibson, *Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, 290–98. See also Ruth Swan and Edward Jerome, “‘Unequal Justice’: The Metis in O’Donoghue’s Raid of 1871,” *Manitoba History* 39 (Summer 2000): 23–38. For a list of the assaults carried out in retribution see Jean Hall “Aftermath: the Reign of Terror,” Provisional Government of Assiniboia, URL: <https://hallnjean2.wordpress.com/chronology-after-the-resistance-1870-1871-2/aftermath/>. Accessed 20 January 2017.

<sup>58</sup> “Proulx to Paré” 27 August 1870, 255.109 Nord Ouest/St. Boniface (4) 1860-1875 #6, Archives Archdiocese of Montreal.

his assessment of the newly appointed judge Francis Johnson's decisions, legal historian Dale Gibson writes wryly, "To say that Johnson summarized the evidence carefully does not necessarily mean it was fairly summarized."<sup>59</sup>

In the crisis, Riel wrote hastily "Chers Amis, nous nous séparons dans un moment d'orage. Pour ma part, je suis content de ce que nous avons fait ensemble au Fort...Ne nous décourageons pas."<sup>60</sup> But he was bitter, and wrote to his ally Joseph Dubuc, "Priez pour moi, nous avons été trahis!!! ...je ne regrette rien....S'il te plait, Ma mère!!!! Dis-lui qu'elle ne craigne pas, dieu nous a tous sous sa protection...Mon petit frère! Cher petit enfant!...Si tu le vois, embrasse-le donc pour moi."<sup>61</sup> And at a bitter meeting with A.-A. Taché, Riel, full of recriminations, accused the Bishop of St. Boniface of naivety. He fled to St. Joseph, just across the Canadian-American border, where he stayed with his former Latin teacher the Oblate reverend J.M. Lefloch.<sup>62</sup>

Even from a distance, Riel continued to be involved in local events, trying to defend the interests of the Métis and directing some newly arrived French-Canadian politicians in the necessary work. Correspondence was no simple matter as he and his friends suspected that the mail was being watched and censored. (Riel himself had intercepted the mail during the resistance.)<sup>63</sup> Fearing his letters might be seized, he adopted different pseudonyms such as "LS Bissonnette" and gave directions that letters be sent to different addresses.

These practical issues complicate any efforts to fully reconstruct the extent of Riel's network and the issues that were discussed. There is evidence that correspondence was lost,

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<sup>59</sup> Gibson, *Settlement and Governance, 1812-1872*, 292.

<sup>60</sup> Doc. #1-067, in *CWLR*, 99. This document was only a draft. It is undated.

<sup>61</sup> Doc. #1-066, in *Ibid.*, 97-98.

<sup>62</sup> For these details see Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 134-56.

<sup>63</sup> A letter in the Riel fonds from the wife of Charles Mair suggests that he had some success in blocking the communication of the Canadian party. "Elizabeth Mair to Charles Mair, March 8, 1870," Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #25 PAM.



letters to Prud'homme, either Eustache or Louis-Arthur, have not survived. Also missing are letters he wrote to Pierre Delorme, the member of Parliament for Provencher. One tantalizing letter from Delorme recounts that he had been invited to dinner with G.-E. Cartier; one wonders what Riel, who had attempted to interest the Conservative chief in his own plans since 1865, would have replied, for Riel had earlier turned down the seat that Delorme was occupying.<sup>64</sup>

Despite these problems, significant correspondence has survived. Riel's letters with Noel Richot, George Dugas, and Bishop Taché provide information regarding his movements and plans. Even if these relations were not always free from conflict, he was clearly nervous about any kind of break with the Catholic Church and particularly the bishop for whom he had immense respect.<sup>65</sup> Also preserved are his letters to Louis Rodrigue Masson, the son of his benefactor in Montreal. The Riel family fonds show an extraordinary degree of activity during the years 1870-72. In September 1870, writing from exile in St. Norbert, Riel officially turned over the ownership of the paper *The New Nation* to Joseph Royal.<sup>66</sup> Riel asked Joseph Dubuc to keep him abreast of all news, to send him copies of the newspapers, and, in May or June, sent an official protest to him regarding land title to present to the government.<sup>67</sup> Still writing from St. Joseph on the border, Riel also corresponded with former critics, such as Andrew Graham Bannatyne and Charles Nolin, successfully patching up old disputes. He wrote to Nolin, "Mon Cher cousin, Ce qui m'a le plus touché dans ta lettre, c'est la noble demand que tu me fais: celle de nous regarder de la même façon qu'avant les troubles. Oui!"<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> "Pierre Delorme to Louis Riel, April 26, 1872" Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #149 PAM.

<sup>65</sup> He took his correspondence with Taché very seriously. He made over three drafts of one letter to Taché. #1-072; #1-073; #1-074 Riel, *CWLR*, 103-9. It would not be the first time Riel's loyalty to his spiritual father was tested, see Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*.

<sup>66</sup> Doc. #1-069 Riel, *CWLR*, 100-101.

<sup>67</sup> Doc. #1-093 *Ibid.*, 141. His brother Charles would bring the money for the newspaper subscriptions to Dubuc.

<sup>68</sup> Doc. #1-090 *Ibid.*, 138. It is worth noting that Riel makes no mention of the death of one of Nolin's children in the letter, but focuses on the reparations between the families.

Riel's correspondence often ran parallel to other links. A large correspondence between A.-A. Taché and Rodrigue Masson, Bourget and Louis-François Laflèche, the bishop of Trois Rivières, was also opening doors for Riel. One relationship led to others. As will be shown later, both Rodrigue Masson and Joseph Royal had a steady stream of correspondence with the editor of the paper *Le Nouveau Monde*, Alphonse Desjardins. And one of Riel's classmates, Emmanuel-Persillier Lachapelle was the person responsible for introducing Riel to Desjardins. Communication sustained the network and helped it expand as new relationships were established and the degrees of relations shrank.

#### **4.2 The Fenian Raid**

On 16 July 1871, Joseph Dubuc wrote that a reporter, Mr. Wakeman, of the Chicago Tribune wanted to meet with Riel. Wakeman came recommended by James W. Taylor, the American Consul, and he assured Riel that he would not publish what Riel did not want.<sup>69</sup> This was not unusual, Riel's activities attracted considerable attention south of the border: during the Resistance, Riel received letters offering assistance and advice from American supporters in Lancaster, Minnesota and Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>70</sup> In the years 1871-1873, different American interests tried to pull Riel into their networks. It is worth noting that due to the nature of "national" archiving Métis networking with Americans is more difficult to trace. Such communication could be embarrassing, or delegitimizing for a British subject and was necessarily covert.

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<sup>69</sup> "Dubuc to Riel, 16 July 1871," Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #102 PAM.

<sup>70</sup> John Holland from Cleveland and Charles Beaseley from Lancaster wrote to "Lewis Riell." Enos Stutsman, who was appointed post master for St. Joseph and customs officer, was a frequent correspondent, and may have advised Riel about the intentions of the approaching Canadian military force. See Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #16, 18, 20 & 28 PAM.

The “hidden” nature of these lines of communication has caused some confusion among historians trying to untangle Riel’s links to American networks. John P. Pritchett, George Stanley, and others since, have concluded that the anonymous “Memorial of people of Rupert’s Land and the North-west” sent to president Ulysses S. Grant<sup>71</sup> was the outcome of a meeting held in St. Norbert on 17 September 1870 and organized by Riel, Amboise Lepine and William B. O’Donoghue.<sup>72</sup> Pritchett’s textual analysis of Riel’s “Memoire” of 1874 and a letter to Lieutenant Governor Morris asserts that there are “striking similarities” and concludes that Riel, O’Donoghue, and Lepine were the authors. Stanley concludes that the final draft of what he mistakenly called “The Petition to the President of the United States” was the work of a committee of which Riel was no doubt a member. Copies of the petition found in the Ramsay fonds at the archives of the Minnesota Historical Association offer important new considerations.

In addition to the copy of this “Memorial” in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, I have found four copies in the archives in Minnesota.<sup>73</sup> They all bear the same title and date, 3 October 1870, and lay out a lengthy list of accusations against the “Company of Adventurers,” the Dominion government and the English Crown. The “Memorial” was originally printed as a pamphlet (thus the intention was to produce multiple copies) and, likely, circulated widely throughout the Northwest American territories and states. Of the four in Minnesota, one, likely the original, is handwritten and includes a map of the Territory; another includes a list of eleven

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<sup>71</sup> Doc. #1-076 *CWLR*, 110–19.

<sup>72</sup> G.F.G. Stanley, “Riel’s Petition to the President of the United States, 1870,” *Canadian Historical Review* 20, no. 4 (December 1939): 422–38; John P. Pritchett, “The Origin of the So-Called Fenian Raid on Manitoba in 1871,” *Canadian Historical Review* 10, no. 1 (March 1929): 23–42. Pritchett endeavoured to prove that Canada was “free from turpitude,” and argues that “Her Majesty’s Officers were...unjustly vilified” by Riel. (29)

<sup>73</sup> Only the first is mentioned in the *CWLR*. See MG 3A 1, 30 PAM. For the others, one copy is in the library of the Minnesota Historical Society, F1063.M53, another is in the “reserve” of Ramsey’s library of Miscellaneous Pamphlets E151.R35 v. 25:26, two more are found in the Records of Territorial Governor Minnesota, Alexander Ramsey P2869. I was only able to access the Microfilm M203-204 Roll #19.

well known Métis and American names, but not Louis Riel.<sup>74</sup> It includes the following handwritten note: “The Hon. Senator will not please allow that the names attached to become public for reasons previously explained.” The note is by signed William B. O’Donoghue. The absence of Riel’s name even in the more confidential copy raises questions about Stanley and Pritchett’s conclusions.

It is worthwhile considering the text again. The chief complaint of the “Memorial” was that “said negotiations were conducted and concluded ... [without consulting] the people (your memorialists) of the proposed transfer.” In following the maxim that “resistance to tyrants is obedience to God,” they resolved to expel the “foreign power.” This is emphatically not Riel’s rhetoric. Riel, in his most radical language, only ever claimed that the people had a right to form a government when abandoned or subjugated (*assujettit*) to a *foreign* power.<sup>75</sup> However, Riel could have written the following, agreements made “in good faith, and relying on the sincerity of the English and Dominion Governments” were betrayed and the people found themselves persecuted. And Riel certainly would have agreed that the memorialists, “acting upon the highest principles of civil and religious liberty, in asserting the great and sacred principle of self-government, recognized through the civilized world as an inalienable right,” had been forced by false promises into a Confederation with Canada. The main question is whether he would have gone so far as to write the following.

Impelled by a universal desire to be permitted peacefully to enjoy a Government of our own choosing, or to change our allegiance for political and commercial reasons to some other Government of our choice, and being thoroughly satisfied

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<sup>74</sup> First 11 names on the list were members of the Métis Provisional government, indicated by the title “Hon.”: Francois Dauphinas; John Bpt. Tourond; Louis Lacerte; Pierre Poitras; Hugh O’Lone; Pierre Paranteau; Xavier Page; Ambroise Lepine; Baptiste Millett; Alfred H. Scott and William O’Donoghue. Also included are “Pere” L. Simonett; Raphel Biulefuell; Marcel Roy; Norbert Deslaurer; Henry McKenny; Henry Bousquet; Chas. L. Champagne; Urban Delorme.

<sup>75</sup> This was made in reference to the works of Duvoisin (mentioned in chapter 2) “Déclaration des habitants de la terre de Rupert et du Nord-Ouest” doc. #1-021 in *CWLR*, 35-38. See also Thomas Flanagan, “Political Theory of the Red River Resistance,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 11, no. 1 (March 1978): 153–64.

that neither peace nor prosperity can exist in our country, under a Government which has by its bad faith forfeited all claim upon the confidence of our people, and has instituted a war of extermination against us; and considering further the vast extent of barren and impassible territory, that separates us from the Dominion of Canada, we again earnestly appeal to your Excellency ... to intercede in our behalf, and to take all such steps as your Excellency may deem appropriate and proper, to enable us to enjoy the blessings of life, liberty, property and the pursuit of happiness.<sup>76</sup>

Even Stanley thought this was too much for Riel, and he argued that O'Donoghue altered the text without Riel's knowledge at the last minute.<sup>77</sup> The text was clearly prepared for an American audience, and not just the American president. It contains multiple phrases reminiscent of republican talk of liberties and rights—not the least of which is “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The addition of “property” to this holy trinity, does not disrupt the general republican tenor of the writing.<sup>78</sup> While the critique of “unlimited power” and “almost despotic power” of the Monarchy and Company monopoly fits within English Republican thought generally, the “great and sacred principle of self-government” owes far more to the American mythology.<sup>79</sup> It is worth pointing out that Riel did use the phrase “war of extermination” and a very similar phrase “my reputation, my liberty, my life” at his defence speech in 1885.<sup>80</sup>

However, these were terms that he used only after the Amnesty issue. In 1875, he still believed that the British government was the best hope for the Métis. And to prove it, he had openly broken up with O'Donoghue, telling him that “he had only been required in the late trouble for

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<sup>76</sup> Doc. #1-076 in *CWLR*, 110–19.

<sup>77</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 163.

<sup>78</sup> For an extended discussion of republicanism in the Resistance see Darren O'Toole, “The Red River Resistance: The Machiavellian Moment of the Red River Métis of Manitoba” (Phd Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2010).

<sup>79</sup> The “Anglicization of the Republic” is best described by J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, 2nd ed (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 406–22. For Pocock political thought is constituted through the paradigm of virtue. The Federalists offered a new paradigm through their conquest of a wilderness that allowed them to equate virtue with commerce, but it was Andrew Jackson who escalated it into the domain of myth (513-536). For a revealing study of the Jackson the man versus the myth and his impact upon the populist tradition in American political thought see Jason Opal, *Avenging the People: Andrew Jackson, the Rule of Law and the American Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

<sup>80</sup> See “Notes for the Address to the Jury,” and “Address to the Jury,” docs. #3-079 and A3-012 in *CWLR*, 155-156, and 523-539.

the sake of his G—d d—d tongue.”<sup>81</sup> Even if Riel was initially involved with the “Memorial” he certainly wanted nothing to do with it by the end of September 1872.

There certainly was American interest in the affairs in the north, and some felt it their duty, and even their national interest, to “protect” the Métis. The Governor of Minnesota, Alexander Ramsay was the Secretary of War, and the president of the Minnesota Historical association—where the papers are kept. Ramsay was also a strong proponent of American annexation of the Northwest, and, as seen in Chapter One, received of an earlier petition from the Pembina Métis led by Father Belcourt and Jean-Louis Riel. In 1867, Ramsay had twice put resolutions before the Senate committee on foreign relations to inquire into “the advisability of a treaty between Great Britain and the United States providing for the cession to the United States of British America west of longitude 90°.”<sup>82</sup> And, in February 1870, he had proposed that the American Government mediate between the Dominion of Canada and the settlement of Red River with the intention of setting up a plebiscite to allow the People to freely determine “whether they desire to join their political destiny with the United States or with Canada.”<sup>83</sup> In all likelihood Ramsay, rather than Grant, was O’Donoghue’s target.

O’Donoghue was vying for control of the Métis leadership. Father Lefloch reported to Bishop Taché on 7 September 1870, ten days before the meeting when the Memorial was supposed to have been drafted, that O’Donoghue had called Riel a coward and challenged him to a fight.<sup>84</sup> Recalling the contest over the flag poles in the winter of 1869, it seems the alliance had always been tenuous. O’Donoghue’s association with Fenianism was problematic.

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<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 162.

<sup>82</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 40 congress 2, session, Part I, 79; *Journal of the Senate* 40 congress 2 Session, 777. Quoted in Pritchett, “The Origin of the So-Called Fenian Raid on Manitoba in 1871,” 35.

<sup>83</sup> *Congressional Globe*, 41 congress, 2 session, Part I, 931-33, *St. Paul Daily Press*, 8 February 1870. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>84</sup> “LeFloch to Taché, 7 September 1870,” Taché Fonds 75 # 7980-7983 SHSB.

The Fenian movement, dedicated to weakening the British Empire by attacking its possessions in North America. The debates for Confederation and the stability of the Canadian state were closely tied to the Fenian threat.<sup>85</sup> David Wilson writes, “The effort to remodel Canada in the image of constitutional conservatism was inseparable from the effort to defeat Fenianism.”<sup>86</sup> The Fenian network is a noteworthy example of the voluntary societies that offered alternative means of access to power through association. Its influence in Canada has been the subject of recent research. Historians Peter Toner and D.C. Lyne point to the relative weakness of the Fenian movement in the countryside and its pre-eminence in Montreal.<sup>87</sup> The Fenian network was interested in the troubles in the Northwest, but was one that Riel treated with extreme wariness.<sup>88</sup> The Fenian raid of 1871 in the Northwest produced similar effects as the larger raids in central Canada.<sup>89</sup> While this raid was not officially sanctioned by the American Fenian Brotherhood, it caused political turmoil akin to a “garrison mentality.”<sup>90</sup> It should be remembered that this was a context where the Métis remained the dominant military force in a borderlands. An alliance between the Fenians and the Métis could have been devastating to Canadian sovereignty. The state was unable to effectively control violence which, wielded by a fifth column, might prove devastating to Canadian claims to sovereignty.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Peter Vronsky, *Ridgeway: The American Fenian Invasion and the 1866 Battle That Made Canada* (Toronto: Penguin, 2012). Desmond Morton, “Aid to the Civil Power: The Canadian Militia in Support of Social Order, 1867–1914,” *Canadian Historical Review* 51, no. 4 (December 1970): 407–25.

<sup>86</sup> Wilson, *The Extreme Moderate*, 196–241.

<sup>87</sup> Peter Toner and D.C. Lyne, “Fenianism in Canada 1874–84,” *Studia Hibernica* 12 (1972): 27–76. See also David Wilson, “Fenianism in Montreal, 1861–1868: Invasion, Intrigue, and Assassination,” *Eire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies* 38, no. 3–4 (2003): 109–33.

<sup>88</sup> Riel’s initial trepidation may have also been related to his own health. Stanley notes that Riel became very sick in early 1871. There were rumours that he had been poisoned and his mother had to go and fetch him. Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 167.

<sup>89</sup> Swan and Jerome, “‘Unequal Justice’: The Metis in O’Donoghue’s Raid of 1871.”

<sup>90</sup> According to Murray Greenwood, the Fenian threat encouraged a “garrison mentality” which structured Canadian deference to authority even at the expense of justice. Frank Murray Greenwood, *Legacies of Fear: Law and Politics in Quebec in the Era of the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

<sup>91</sup> Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), 88–91.

As George Stanley has shown, O'Donoghue was the primary force behind the invasion.<sup>92</sup> He hoped to capitalize upon Métis discontent and attempted to stimulate the Métis into action. As his signature on the above pamphlet suggests, he had some success. Another American, Alfred H. Scott, a former member of the Provisional Government and signee of O'Donoghue's "Memorial" to President Grant, also wrote to Riel in August 1871.<sup>93</sup> There are four letters back and forth between them, concerning a "matter of political importance" that Scott did not dare to communicate by mail. It seems that Scott hoped for a meeting with Riel to gain his support for the Fenian Raid. Riel replied cautiously that he was embarrassed, but could not meet with Scott.<sup>94</sup>

Instead, Riel rallied the Métis against the Fenian invasion. In late September 1871, Riel organized a series of public assemblies of Métis where O'Donoghue's plans were discussed and attendees determined to oppose him and form a troop of 200 soldiers to that effect.<sup>95</sup> Notes from a meeting on 28 September 1871 show that Riel proposed each member "se mette en rapport avec les représentants du peuple et les personnes influentes des diverses paroisses pour arriver à déterminer les Métis d'une manière unanime autant que possible en faveur des avantages déjà possédés en vertu du Bill de Manitoba." On 3 October when Manitoba's new Lieutenant Governor Adams George Archibald panicked and issued a proclamation which called upon all loyal citizens to defend the British Territory, Riel was ready. At a meeting on the morning of 6 October the Assembly arranged "pour avoir des couriers[!] dans toutes les directions afin que ces

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<sup>92</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 157-176

<sup>93</sup> "Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers" MG3 D1 #106, #108, #109 & 110 PAM.

<sup>94</sup> "Letter to A.H. Scott," August 1871, doc. #1-095 in *CWLR*, 143.

<sup>95</sup> Riel "Compte rendu de reunion ayant trait aux Fénians St. Vital," doc. #1-097, in *CWLR*, 144-49. This document lists meetings on 28 September, 4, 5, 6 and 7 October. There were only between 8 and 15 men recorded at these meetings, held at the house of Riel or Lepine. Riel did not dictate terms at these meetings, other Métis disagreed with him and were in favour of neutrality, but Riel's attempts to persuade the others to support the Canadian government were successful. See Swan and Jerome, "'Unequal Justice': The Metis in O'Donoghue's Raid of 1871." A. H. de Trémaudan, "Louis Riel and the Fenian Raid of 1871," *Canadian Historical Review* 4, no. 2 (June 1923): 132-44.



assemblées aient lieu partout dans les paroisses françaises et dedans d’une vingtaine d’heures et qu’un rapport de ces assemblées soit fait le lendem[ain] le 7 entre deux heures de l’après-midi et 4 heures par chacun des membres de l’association chez André Nault à St. Vital.” At the reunion of 7 October each parish declared their intentions to favour the Canadian appointed government and Riel was asked to make this result known to Archibald.<sup>96</sup> The notes also show that a “capitaine” and a “second” for a cavalry had been elected to represent each district. While Tremaudan and Stanley have reconstructed these events it is worth revisiting the original documents for the details they provide on the operation of the network. Both authors miss the essential point that local networks amongst Métis supporters were strengthened rather than weakened during 1871.

Chosen by George-Étienne Cartier, the Lieutenant Governor Archibald was reputed to be sympathetic to the Métis. It is worth noting that his daughter was being educated by the Grey Nuns and met with Louis Riel’s sister Sara, who declared her anxiety to her brother regarding this familiarity.<sup>97</sup> Through the careful manoeuvring of allies the Métis troops were paraded before the Lieutenant Governor, who reportedly shook hands with the Métis leader.<sup>98</sup> Riel’s intentions with this grand spectacle are made clear by an undated draft of a petition in the Riel

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<sup>96</sup> Riel’s letter to Archibald was later published in the “Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties” and in the *Pioneer Press* in St. Paul. Notes of the deliberations from the parishes of St. Germain, Pointe Coupee and St. Norbert along with twenty-three signatures are found in the Riel Fonds in St. Boniface. See also Riel, “Délibérations d’une assemblée” doc. #1-101, in *CWLR*, 155. At this last meeting Père Pierre Parenteau served as President; Riel served as secretary. See also Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 171–73.

<sup>97</sup> Lesley Erickson, “‘Bury Our Sorrows in the Sacred Heart’: Gender and the Métis Response to Colonialism—the Case of Sara and Louis Riel, 1848–83,” in *Unsettled Pasts: Reconceiving the West Through Women’s History*, ed. Sarah Carter et al. (Calgary: University of Calgary, 2005), 28.

<sup>98</sup> According to the deposition of M.A. Girard, Joseph Royal was responsible for suggesting this spectacle for the Governor. *Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties in the North West Territory in 1869–70*, (Ottawa: Printed by I.B. Taylor, 1874), 180. Girard points out the delicacy of the affair, “Afterwards he went with me among the crowd at the river and I, Royal, and Dubuc introduced him to the prominent men amongst whom was Riel. I introduced Riel as the man whom the half breeds had chosen as their chief for the occasion. I thought it would be better not to give the name of Riel to the Governor. This had occurred to my own mind on the way across the river. It had not in any way been discussed.”

fonds: Métis loyalty during the Fenian threat depended upon the Canadian government's promise to provide an amnesty.<sup>99</sup> It backfired, however, for Archibald's enemies this handshake was an opportunity to attack his integrity. Outraged at this "betrayal," "Loyalists" from Ontario, renewed their call for vengeance against the Métis leadership for the murder of Thomas Scott.<sup>100</sup> Archibald was attacked as a traitor in the press and by December had been forced to resign.<sup>101</sup>

Riel had used the crisis to expand the influence of the Métis networks. He took it one step further by institutionalizing the authority of these networks through "official" organization. By keeping a formal record of these assemblies, and correspondence related to their formation, Riel hoped to use them as "proof" should anyone question his loyalty—many of them were published in the "Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties". This explains why Riel was very anxious that his opponents might steal them.<sup>102</sup> In November Riel consolidated these efforts by formalizing this new association into the political society St. Alexander in honour of, and in an effort to gain the support of, bishop A.-A. Taché.<sup>103</sup> The "Compte Rendu" of the meeting from November 5<sup>th</sup> provides the following rationale: "Je m'entends avec Monsieur Lépine, Ambroise et Louis Schmidt M.P.P. pour former avec les principaux Métis des différent paroisses une association qui nous permettra de garder en main l'influence parmi nos gens." Representatives from St. Vital, Prairie du Cheval Blanc, St. Boniface, and Pointe des Chênes

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<sup>99</sup> The editors of the *Collected Works* suggest it was written in September 1871. Riel "Pétition des Métis et autres habitants du Manitoba au Lieutenant gouverneur A.G. Archibald," doc. #1-098, in *CWLR*, 1:151–53.

<sup>100</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 175.

<sup>101</sup> Certainly the "fanaticism" of the English press is portrayed with strokes of a broad brush, see Arthur Silver, "Ontario's Alleged Fanaticism in the Riel Affair," *Canadian Historical Review* 69, no. 1 (March 1989): 21–50. However, the memory of Archibald's treachery was long lived as he and Riel were burned in effigy in April 1872. "Dugas to Riel" April 1872, Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #145, PAM.

<sup>102</sup> He wrote to Taché on 21 March 1872 from St. Paul to say that Dr. Brown had attempted precisely this. "Lettre à A.-A. Taché," 21 March 1872, doc. #1-121, in *CWLR*, 1985, 1:179–80.

<sup>103</sup> In a note linked to the November reunions, Riel describes the formation of a society, the collection of £20:6:0, and the decision to launch legal complaints against David Mulligan and Bapt. Charette for having threatened their members. "1-104 Notes diverses," *Ibid.*, 1:158. "1-106 Compte rendu d'une suite de réunions" *Ibid.*, 1:159–60. The representatives from Prairie du Cheval Blanc, otherwise known as Francois-Xavier, may have been reluctant to join as a note on the 10<sup>th</sup> indicates that Riel set out again in an effort to explain their association.

were invited. Even John Bruce who had opposed Riel, began in November to seek reconciliation with the reinvigorated Métis chief.<sup>104</sup> Institutionalizing otherwise informal relationships into the Association St. Alexandre was a means for the Métis to surpass the restrictions of liberal individualism and confront the state with their own collective will. As Jean-Marie Fecteau argues, for Lower Canada, in a liberal political context voluntary associations were a link to political power.<sup>105</sup>

In the name of this new association Riel continued to lobby the government to respect the past promises made. He also had a mouthpiece with which to make his point, the newspaper *Le Métis*, edited by Joseph Dubuc.<sup>106</sup> On 11 January, “Notre Condition Politique,” Riel’s critique of four ministers in Archibald’s government, Marc-A. Girard, Henry Clarke, Joseph Boyd and Thomas Howard, was published in *Le Métis*.<sup>107</sup> Another public letter appeared in *Le Métis* on the 18<sup>th</sup> this time in the name of the St. Alexander Association and signed by twenty-one members. It was a note of congratulations to Taché on having been elevated to Archbishop.<sup>108</sup>

This association was also distinct from another local Society named in honour of St. Jean Baptiste. The latter was nominally a French-Canadian association, but Riel was vice-president and many other Métis were also members.<sup>109</sup> As a separate association, the Society of St. Alexander provided the Métis with important flexibility and independence. As will be shown, in

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<sup>104</sup> “John Bruce to Louis Riel,” 30 October and 2 November, Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #117 & 118 PAM. Riel’s reply has not been found.

<sup>105</sup> Fecteau, “État et Associationnisme Au XIXe Siècle Québécois: Éléments Pour Une Problematique Des Rapports État/Société Dans La Transition Au Capitalisme,” in *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada*, ed. Allan Greer and Ian Walter Radforth (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

<sup>106</sup> *Le Métis* started printing in May 1871. It was first set up by Joseph Royal,

<sup>107</sup> 11 January 1872, *Le Métis*, 2. On 2 September 1870 Riel sent a note to both Royal and Dubuc that the *New Nation* now belonged to them and would be handed to them by the “Comité National des Métis.” “Lettre à Joseph Royal, 2 September 1870,” doc. #1-069, in *CWLR*, 100.

<sup>108</sup> 18 January 1872, *Le Métis*, 2. The return of the Bishop was marked by a grand ceremony at the Cathedral. Joseph Royal read a public address on behalf of the Society of St. Jean-Baptiste. The address from the Society of St. Alexander was not read, nor was Riel present at the public gathering, instead F.-X. Dauphinas came as a representative.

<sup>109</sup> 14 December 1871, *Le Métis*, 2.

the future it would become more advantageous to link these two associations, but in February 1872, it was considered more expedient for the Métis to operate independent from a French-Canadian association.<sup>110</sup> At the federal level, for the moment, Riel was sidelined by political struggles in Canada, but it was clear that Riel's influence and presence in the public sphere embarrassed the efforts of the Conservative party in Canada. Consequently, Cartier wrote to Joseph Royal to advise Riel that he, like the *patriotes* of 1837, must undertake a period of exile.<sup>111</sup> The agreement needed more than an exchange of good will and flattery though. Through the intervention of Bishop Taché, who visited Ottawa early in 1872 to acquire a bank draft of \$1000 from John A. Macdonald, Riel finally agreed. Riel and Lepine undertook a voluntary exile when the bishop promised to use the money to support their families.<sup>112</sup> The cold cash was Macdonald's effort to purchase credit in the system of political capital that the Métis leaders of Red River controlled.

Relationships within networks and associations often overlapped and conflicted. Riel's associations with American networks were particularly complicated: while he was not interested in the support of Fenians, he was interested in other groups linked to the Catholic church and to other Métis family relations. A similar ambivalence to French-Canadian support led Riel to organize the Society of St. Alexander. Such careful political negotiation and forming of alliances demonstrates an acute awareness of the political utility and power of these associations and would play an important role in the complex ethnic and confessional context of Montreal.

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<sup>110</sup> Dubuc's letter to Riel on 31 January, notes that there is a meeting of the "society" and he would like to meet with Riel. "Joseph Dubuc to Riel," Louis Riel Correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #130, PAM. Riel replied the next day to report on the meeting and resolutions taken with regards to electoral reform. Riel "Lettre à Joseph Dubuc, 1 February 1872," doc. #1-114, *CWLR*, 171.

<sup>111</sup> "Joseph Royal à Louis Riel," PAM MG 3 D 1, 60, SHSB.

<sup>112</sup> For these details see Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 179–81. For Macdonald's letter to Taché see "John A. MacDonald to Taché 27 Dec 1871," Fonds CACRSB Taché Correspondence T #9761-9762, SHSB.

### 4.3 Drafting a *Mémoire* on the Troubles

Re-constructing Riel's network is a bit like attempting a picture puzzle without all of the pieces. The letters come from a number of different archives and not all of the letters have survived, but they illustrate how networks provided Riel with the cultural and social capital necessary for engaging in political struggles in Canada. During the winter and spring of 1872 Riel began to collect his notes for what would become his most important public statement on the Métis resistance in 1869-70. Riel collected his papers and communicated with others about their use because such connections provided intellectual, spiritual and political support.

While living in northern Minnesota in 1872 Riel responded to a request he had received months earlier from Rodrigue Masson in Montreal. These papers, also preserved in the Masson fonds in Saint Boniface, are a collection of notes that describe the convention held at Fort Garry from November to December.<sup>113</sup> Riel's notes became the basis for an argument regarding sovereignty, or a legal case for the amnesty and the legitimate authority of the Provisional Government that he had established in 1870. However, in order to write these notes Riel sent a series of letters to Bishop Alexandre Taché, his former secretary Louis Schmidt, and Joseph Dubuc.<sup>114</sup>

The letter requesting more details on the events of the Resistance, and preserved in the Masson fonds in St. Boniface, is one Masson initially wrote to Joseph Royal, the speaker of Manitoba's first Legislative Assembly and also the editor of the newspaper *Le Métis*. Royal and Masson were old political allies and both were committed to the ultramontane programme of

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<sup>113</sup> "Notes préparées pour Rodrigue Masson" 0592/1813/06-10 SHSB. See also docs. #1-124 through 1-129, in *CWLR*, 183-201. These papers were donated by Henri Masson to the St. Boniface Historical Society in 2009. They also include a copy of the letter Riel and Lepine wrote to Archibald in October 1871, and a carte de visite photograph of Riel taken in St. Paul.

<sup>114</sup> See the series of letters from January to March 1872 held in the Riel Fonds at the Saint Boniface Historical Society and in Riel, *CWLR*. For instance, Riel, under a pseudonym, wrote to Taché on 27 January.

defending the rights of the church in Quebec society. Royal's response is preserved in the Masson fonds at the BANQ (Bibliothèque et Archives Nationale du Québec); he wrote to say that due to a lack of material he would forward the request to Louis Riel—"you can trust his account." Royal's letter to Riel is also in the Masson fonds in the BANQ (Riel likely sent Royal's letter along with his own when he had completed his notes).<sup>115</sup> In it Royal wished Riel a happy New Year, offering as comfort the consolation of knowing that his suffering in exile was the consequence of having served justice, and indicated that he was including Masson's request. Most likely, Masson sought information about the events of 1869-70 and particularly the execution of Thomas Scott because he was planning to present the issue to parliament and demand an amnesty.

It is worth emphasizing again that Masson was an old acquaintance of Riel from Montreal. The links between the Masson and the Riel families started when Sophie Masson, Rodrigue's mother, had sponsored the milling operation started by Riel's father. She had also paid for Riel's education in Montreal. Riel had spent summers at the Masson family home in Terrebonne where he met her son Rodrigue. By 1873, Masson was an influential conservative member of parliament: he had been minister of the militia and would become the leader of the conservative opposition during the absence of Macdonald and Cartier. Later Masson continued to support the Métis and the First Nations of the Northwest.<sup>116</sup> In 1877, he spoke on this topic in

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<sup>115</sup> LR Masson Correspondence Ser. 22.1, Fonds Masson P650, BANQ. Royal's letter is dated 3 January 1872. Two months later, on February 28, Royal wrote again to Masson, telling him that while Riel's response was disappointing—Masson had hoped for something else. (This was likely a copy of the letter Riel had written to Archibald in October.) Royal however was thankful that Riel, for his own safety, had left the settlement to spend six to ten months in Plattsburgh. Either this was a ruse to throw off unintended readers, or Royal's ignorance. Riel was in fact staying in St. Paul.

<sup>116</sup> He was one of two MPs to protest the exclusion of Riel and Lepine from the general amnesty in 1874.

the House of Commons: “I have always believed that it was a very unfortunate business, and that the people had good reason to be discontented.”<sup>117</sup>

By April 1872 Riel had finished his notes as per Masson’s request and, to ensure safe delivery to Masson in Montreal, he entrusted the papers to Pierre Delorme, the recently elected representative for the riding of Provencher, Manitoba.<sup>118</sup> Riel met Delorme in St. Paul, Minnesota, to pass the notes on to him, and Delorme took them to Ottawa. Delorme gave the the notes to Masson, who then approached Hector Langevin. Langevin in turn brought up the matter with Sir John A. Macdonald.<sup>119</sup> This long chain shows how family and intimate ties linked Riel to Montreal and to Ottawa. As Adele Perry has remarked, such intimate ties were equally important for state governance as the official channels.<sup>120</sup> For Riel, they made communication possible despite censure by the official lines of communication.

The logic of association was much more than pieces of paper sent hundreds of miles away; correspondence was governed by a much more complex series of social interactions. As Bruno Latour argues, in order to study associations it is necessary to “slow down.”<sup>121</sup> To understand the implications of forming social relations one must draw them out in greater detail and describe the territory on which they are formed rather than assume their concrete existence. Masson sought to advance the ultramontane movement in Quebec. Royal, equally involved in the ultramontane struggle, saw Riel’s cause as one with potential, and therefore put Riel in touch with Masson. Masson was already a longtime friend of Riel, and likely had encouraged Riel to

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<sup>117</sup> “Rodrigue Masson,” *DCB*.

<sup>118</sup> “Lettre à Rodrigue Masson, 4 April 1872,” doc. #1-127, in *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>119</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 188.

<sup>120</sup> Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 142–75. At the same time they are more difficult to trace, Brett Rushforth “O Brother, Where Art Thou,” *Reviews in American History* 32.2 (2004): 151-158.

<sup>121</sup> Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, UK, 2005), 17.

write to George-Étienne Cartier in his youth.<sup>122</sup> The converging lines made Riel a key node in the evolving field of federal politics even if he did not have direct access to power.<sup>123</sup>

For the moment Riel was willing to let Masson handle the issue in Montreal; however, with the collaboration of Ambroise Lépine he sent a private letter to the new Lieutenant Governor Morris protesting against the Canadian government's oppression of their political and public rights.<sup>124</sup> The work that Riel undertook over the course of the spring of 1872 was another step in the process that led to the publication of his *Mémoire* in February 1874.

An undated poem by Riel suggests that he saw his salvation with the politicians in Quebec. (The original is to be found amongst the papers of the Dr. E.P. Lachapelle.)<sup>125</sup> As a good illustration of his deep sense of attachment to Quebec it is worth repeating here.

O Québec  
Québec! Mère Colonie!  
Tu fus de nos aïeux sans cesse les amours!  
Et durant toute ma vie,  
J'aimerai ton doux nom, le prononçant toujours.  
Québec! Province chérie!  
Oublieras-tu jamais tes Métis-Canadiens!  
De Manitoba trahie  
Tes enfants, O Québec, sont pou[r]tant les soutiens!

#### 4.4 Cartier's Election and Death

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<sup>122</sup> Masson had articulated in law in Cartier's office. Riel wrote three poems to Cartier in 1865. "Toi qui conduis l'état, illustre et fier Cartier!...", doc. #4-003, "Ma voix reviendra-t-elle à titre d'importune...", doc. #4-034, and "Au milieu de la foule..." doc. #4-036, in *CWLR*, 67–75.

<sup>123</sup> The Métis network was in some respects similar to the way the Douglas family bridged fur trade and settler society in British Columbia. Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 155. "[The Douglas home] was one node in a wider network of bourgeois Métis peoples whose histories and wealth were associated with the fur trade but who persisted in the settler societies of Victoria, Red River, and in smaller numbers in the Canadas and Scotland."

<sup>124</sup> An English translation of this letter was presented to the "Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties," (1874), 200–7. Drafts of the French version have survived in the Riel Fonds MG 3 D 1, 531, 535 & 536 in St. Boniface Historical Society. See also Riel, doc. # 1-158, in *CWLR*, 243–54.

<sup>125</sup> "O Québec...", doc. #4-045, in *CWLR*, 95–96.



Between 1871-73 Riel was willing to hope that his friends, and their influence amongst the circles of power in Canada, would be able to resolve the outstanding problems.<sup>126</sup> The appointment of a “friendly” Lieutenant Governor, Archibald, and the defeat of Riel’s enemies in the first provincial election must have reinforced his sense of security.

The power of networks is that they connect places, while their efficiency is measured by how well they make those connections. The election of George-Étienne Cartier for the federal seat of Provencher, Manitoba illustrates how efficient the political network had become and how Riel played such an important part in the new field of federal politics. His capabilities in this respect would ultimately situate him well for playing a role in the future of Canadian federal politics. Because Riel had invested heavily in forging a Métis network, he was now a key to unlocking the social capital of Manitoba, which Cartier needed for a political seat in the government.

Despite their embarrassment over the Riel affair, the fortunes of the Conservative party were linked to Louis Riel’s actions. The opposition, directed by Edward Blake and Alexander Mackenzie, continued to make political hay out of the government’s cooperation with the “murderer” of Thomas Scott. Then Canada’s first ministry, under Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, desperate for votes, approached railway builder Hugh Allan for campaign funds (they offered Allan a contract to build the transcontinental railroad in exchange). When the news of the Pacific Scandal broke, it cost Cartier his seat in Montreal in the election of September 1872. To assure him a place in the new ministry, Macdonald sent a telegram to Archibald asking

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<sup>126</sup> Huel argues that Taché’s involvement ensured that Riel would leave it to his friends. *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, 130.

him to arrange the election of Cartier in Manitoba. He concluded with the following warning, “--do not, however allow late Provisional [President] to resign in his favour.”<sup>127</sup>

But Provencher, Riel’s riding, was the only secure riding, and Archibald either ignored or forgot Macdonald’s advice. Bishop Taché was asked to speak with Riel to reserve the seat for Cartier. For Riel and his allies this seemed like an opportunity to put forward a list of conditions that the rights of the original “settlers” (i.e. Métis) be respected and that no one be allowed to settle on Métis allocated land. It was just as Macdonald feared, it was now Riel’s turn to ask for *better terms*, just as Joseph Howe had for Nova Scotia in 1868. The Taché fonds contain a document, dated 6 September 1872 listing conditions proposed by Riel in exchange for withdrawing in favour of Cartier.<sup>128</sup> Written on paper with the official arms of the Lieutenant Governor, the original document evokes the formal power of a state organization—such details are not reproduced in the featureless, “black and white” text of the *Collected Works*. But the negotiation also took place informally, as Bishop Taché understood, via communication with John A. Macdonald, that Cartier was working on an Amnesty from the British government.<sup>129</sup> Riel turned to the network that he had crafted and Cartier was elected by acclamation in October 1872. Riel and thirty other members of the political society sent a note of congratulations to Cartier on 16 September 1872: “Hon Sir. G.E. Cartier, you have been elected by acclamation member for the electoral district of Provencher.”<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Quoted in Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 184–86.

<sup>128</sup> “Conditions posées par Louis Riel pour se retirer en faveur de Sir G. E. Cartier. [Winnipeg].” Fond Taché 0075: T55018-19, SHSB. See also *CWLR*, 224.

<sup>129</sup> 1-148 *Ibid*. See also “Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties,” 58-60. Taché thought this was the “opportunity to bind Sir George so tightly that he could not help doing even more afterwards than he had done towards the amnesty.” Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 186.

<sup>130</sup> There exist a series of three telegrams. Doc. #1-149; #1-150; #1-151, in *CWLR*, 224. The first was sent by Louis Riel, Joseph Royal, Ambroise Lepine and Joseph Dubuc. The second added the names of André Beauchemin, Baptiste Tourond and A.A.C. LaRivière. The third has 32 names.

The response from the “anti-French” (and anti-Catholic) mob in Winnipeg was violent. In the fall of 1872 the printing shops of *Le Métis* and *Le Manitoban* were smashed, Donald Smith was assaulted with rocks and mud, while Joseph Dubuc and chief of police Louis Plainville were almost beaten to death. Schultz and F.E. Cornish, key organizers of the Orangist faction were gleeful at the damage done to “Jean-Baptiste.”<sup>131</sup> Only the restraint of the Catholic clergy prevented Riel from riding into the settlement at the head of an armed group of Métis. Shortly after, Cartier sent a letter “Aux Electeurs de Provencher” to express his thanks and appreciation, and promised to honour his mandate.<sup>132</sup> However, these proved to be empty words for Cartier was dead within seven months.

It is possible that Riel already had a foreboding that not all was going well. Prior to Cartier’s death, he had a spiritual warning that he would need to do more. It was tied to another more personal loss.<sup>133</sup> His sister Marie-Marguerite died on 25 January 1873; while attending her bedside, Riel suffered from an acute sense of personal responsibility for the Métis family. This only enhanced his despair at the lack of good news from Canada and one evening he collapsed exhausted at the Grey Nuns’ mission in St. Norbert. Months later, he wrote a letter to his sister recounting how that night he had dreamed of his father, and in the morning he was confronted by one of the sisters. Sister Thérèse had noticed his depression and told him that in 1864 she had received from his dying father the benediction for his eldest son, at that point away in Montreal at school.<sup>134</sup> Now it was time for her to pass it on. This reinforced Riel’s sense of responsibility,

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<sup>131</sup> For these events see Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 187.

<sup>132</sup> “Draft of a Circular Letter” MG 3 D 1, 583, SHSB.

<sup>133</sup> Flanagan argues that this was the “conversion” point of Riel, the first time when he felt that he had a spiritual mission, following as it did on the heels of his religious retreat nine years after he had left the college. Thomas Flanagan, *Louis “David” Riel Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 36–38. Flanagan is certainly correct that it is significant that this occurred in such an intimate family context, as it was a source of strength for Riel.

<sup>134</sup> It was already late on 2 May 1873, when Louis Riel reached the Rivière Salée. He stopped for the night with the Sisters of Charity in St. Norbert. Because he was so tired he went to bed earlier than usual. But he found it

and confirmed his “mission”. Cosmic connections shaped his worldview, and he drew strength from the blessings of his family.

Shortly after Cartier’s death, a petition signed by forty-nine people, with English and French names, requested Riel to present himself as a representative for Provencher and defend their rights.<sup>135</sup> Riel began to prepare a “national programme” and became determined to run for office.<sup>136</sup> When Lepine was arrested for murder of Thomas Scott in September 1873, Riel knew his mission was to take the fight for an amnesty to Montreal.<sup>137</sup>

#### 4.5 Grassroots: Riel’s Election

If one were to chart the various networks which Riel tapped into over the course of the Amnesty campaign it would look akin to a galaxy of exploding stars. By 1873, these alliances lined up to bring the Métis leader to Montreal to act as representative for Métis rights and as a blatant indictment of the government’s failure to resolve the Amnesty issue.

The image below is a visual representation of Riel’s network, based upon written correspondence only. Riel’s correspondence is in blue (thus he is “situated” in the upper left corner). The letters between his family are in green (the tight-knit series of connections just below). Letters between church members (which cross all over the correspondence) are in red.

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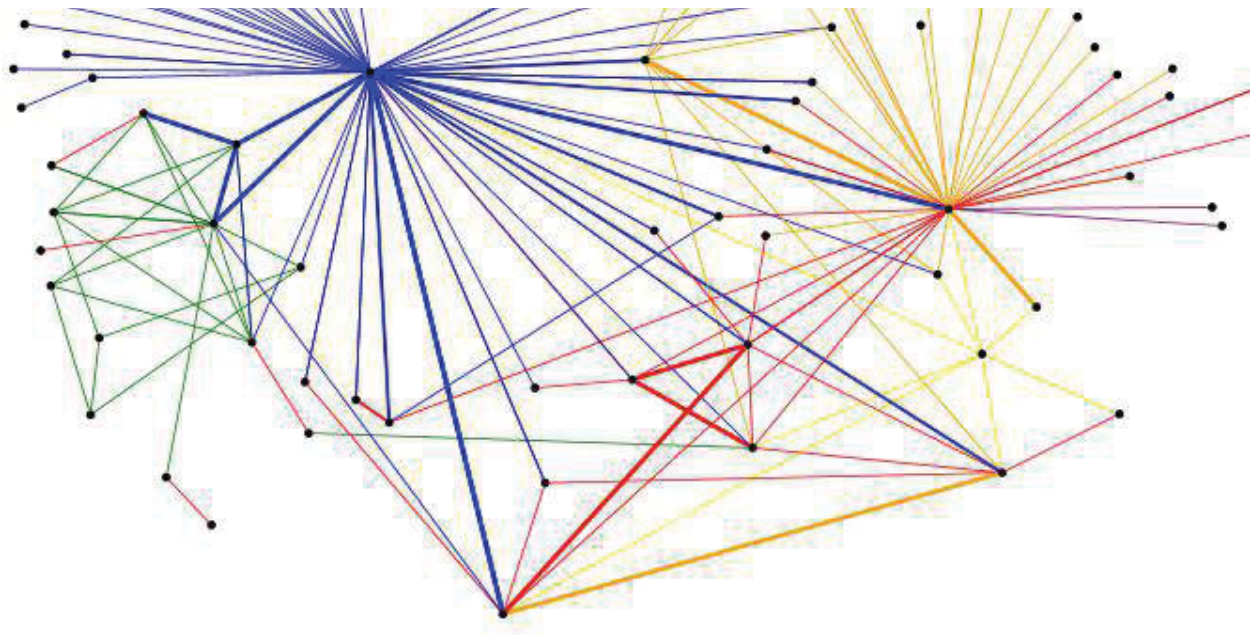
impossible to sleep: “Je laissai ma lampe à demi-haute et cherchai à m’endormir, mais impossible. Oh! Si tu savais combien de fois je t’ai vue dans mes insomnies passer près de moi; et aussi celle que nous regrettons toujours. Je voyais à tout instant notre chère papa. Je ne m’assoupis pas du tout; mais j’avais continuellement affaire à des illusions. Et je ne sais comment, j’étais si attendri que je ne pouvais prier sans que des larmes me montent aux yeux.” Riel, “Lettre à Sara Riel,” doc. #1-173, in *CWLR*, 273–74.

<sup>135</sup> “Pétition à Louis Riel,” MG 3 D 1, 594, SHSB.

<sup>136</sup> “Programme National des Métis Canadiens Français, n.d.” doc. #1-183, in *CWLR*, 289-291.

<sup>137</sup> The warrant was signed by Dr. H.J. O’Donnell on the statement of William Farmer. See Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 191.

The yellow indicates a relationship with the newspaper *Le Nouveau Monde* (the dot in the upper middle). Taché's correspondence (in orange) is on the far right; Bourget's is on the bottom.<sup>138</sup>



Created with NodeXL (<http://nodexl.codeplex.com>)

Despite the archival bias toward Riel's letters, one of the notable aspects of this graph is the difficulty of extricating Riel from the intertwining of correspondence. These relationships overlap and reinforce each other. Also noticeable is the impossibility of isolating the clerical influence, their letters defy attempts to segregate them into one place or logic. Nonetheless, the presence of "bridgeheads," or principal nodes, around which overlapping networks coalesce can be seen. Riel is one bridgehead; Bourget, Taché and the newspaper are others.

In the summer of 1873, Riel began grassroots preparation for taking the struggle for an amnesty to Montreal. This may explain his new alliance with the St. Jean Baptiste Society in Red River. On June 25 Joseph Royal, a proponent of unity between French Canadians and the Métis,

<sup>138</sup> The graph was produced in NodeXL, based upon a list of all the correspondence I have consulted during the years 1872-5. The vectors represent a combination of all of the Riel family fond correspondence from the PAM, Taché's correspondence from the SSHB, Bourget's correspondence from the AADM, and Royal and Masson's correspondence from the BANQ, as well as other letters I have consulted from these archives.

reported that all parishes had participated in the ceremony for the feast of St. Jean Baptiste: “Ce qui prouve que nos compatriotes, qu’ils soient natifs de Manitoba ou de la Province de Quebec, veulent s’entendre pour ne former qu’une seule population marchand[!] sous le même drapeau national.”<sup>139</sup> Prior to mass, a large number of marchers met at the College St. Boniface in order to form a procession with flags, banners and many of them wearing the St. Jean Baptiste Association’s badge. Preceded by the college band, which made joyous fanfare, the procession made its way across the lawn of the Archbishop’s palace and to the cathedral.<sup>140</sup> There, Riel in the company of Madame Joseph Dubuc made an offering. Acting as vice-president of the association he also gave an address to the public gathering after mass: “Vos enfants réunissant sous le drapeau de la St. Jean-Baptiste que nous adoptons comme notre fête nationale, viennent vous saluer. Ce doit être un grand bonheur pour vous, Monseigneur, de voir dans la fondation d’un peuple nouveau fêtant ici sa nationalité, le résultat de ce que vous dites et faites au milieu de nous dans vos mission évangéliques.”<sup>141</sup> These were precisely the kinds of arrangements he would have overseen as a councillor of the *Congrégation de la Ste. Vierge* at the college during the consecration of the new chapel in 1864.

Riel also prepared a more formal “programme,” a document which he likely believed could be used as the basis for negotiations with Canada. With this document Riel intended to revisit the Manitoba Act; it was his equivalent to Joseph Howe’s *better terms*.<sup>142</sup> It was only a

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<sup>139</sup> *Le Métis* 5 July 1873, 2.

<sup>140</sup> “L’Eglise était splendidement décorée. Les tentures blanches, rouges et bleues tombant en larges festons et disposées avec goût et habileté, et la verdure qui montait le long des colonnes, formaient un coup d’oeil vraiment intéressant. Un magnifique pain bénit à sept étages et orné de gâteaux, était sur un brancard au milieu de la grande allée.” *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> For a discussion of the negotiated compromise between Macdonald and Howe see the discussion by Elsbeth Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government*, 79-87. Heaman argues that Howe’s defection was not “mere corruption: he realized that the battle could be won no other way.” Howe had to accept Macdonald’s clientelist, patronage style politics in order to increase the amount of taxes to transfer to the provinces.

draft, but it outlined ten of Riel's goals. The first seven dealt with claims on the Canadian government:

- 1) Execution of the law giving 1,400,000 acres of land to the children of Métis resident in the province;
- 2) Execution of the law granting the land to old settlers who had purchased land as permitted by the HBC in those parts where Indian title had been extinguished;
- 3) Execution of the law assuring the right of pre-emption (a privilege recognized by the HBC);
- 4) Recognition of the two miles of Haying privileges at the ends of property;
- 5) The lands claimed after 8 March 1869 ought to be recognized by the Canadian Government;
- 6) Townships designated for the Métis, as recognition of the "Indian right," chosen by Lieutenant-Governor Archibald should be recognized; and
- 7) A proclamation of the amnesty.

The final three were more generic,

- 8) Maintaining the union between the clergy and the population Métis;
- 9) Present a demand that the heads of Métis families also receive from the government the same amount of territory as their children; and
- 10) A demand of 160 acres for the French Canadians who are friends of the Nation Métis.<sup>143</sup>

These claims were repeated in letters sent to various people some copies of which have survived.<sup>144</sup> Riel's message was simple, stay united (*serez donc unis*) and this would guarantee them their "Indian rights" (*le droit que votre sang sauvage vous donne aux terres du pays*).

These efforts bore immediate fruit. In July, he received a letter from Joseph Royal, Joseph Dubuc, Marc-Amable Girard, and Alphonse A.-C. Rivière, four key players in the French-Canadian population in Red River. They declared their support for Riel's election to the federal seat of Provencher.<sup>145</sup> Riel also organized a meeting at André Nault's in order to send support from the "heads of Métis families" to Robert Cunningham, the new Liberal Member of

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<sup>143</sup> "Programme National des Métis Canadiens Français," doc. # 1-183, *CWLR*, 289-292

<sup>144</sup> "Mes chers amis," doc. #1-184, and "Lettre à John McDougall," doc. #1-185, in *CWLR*, 292-295.

<sup>145</sup> "Joseph Royal, Joseph Dubuc, Marc-Amable Girard and Alphonse A.-C. Riviere to Louis Riel July 19, 1873," MG3 D1 #203 SHSB. A second copy of this document, which is unsigned, includes additional comments declaring that the French-Canadians wish to remain united to the French Métis and to aid them.



Parliament for Marquette.<sup>146</sup> Though the precise relationship between Cunningham and Riel is unclear, an earlier letter sent in March suggests that the former was hoping to arrange political support for Riel.<sup>147</sup> And in August, Andrew Bannatyne, a leading member of the English community, offered to use his influence to get Riel elected.<sup>148</sup> Despite the continued hesitation of Taché, who worried about the potential embarrassment this would cause the Conservative party, Riel pressed forward.

There was some opposition. Henry Clarke, an Irish Catholic from Montreal and one of Cartier's envoys was threatening to challenge Riel's candidacy. Clarke had already disrupted the 1872 election in a fiery public dispute with Riel, where it was reported that the Irishman, frustrated and bitter at the temerity of the Métis chief, had threatened his opponent with a pistol.<sup>149</sup> Riel, keeping his composure, won the acclaim of the assembled crowd. Riel described a scene at the house of Salomon Jean Veine, in St. Norbert, to his friend Joseph Dubuc: "Au milieu d'orages, à peid, à cheval, beaucoup s'y sont rendus. Mr. Clarke a commencé à m'attaquer en me déclarant homme sans patriotisme et lâche." Clarke called Riel disloyal for his populism, and cowardly for not entering Winnipeg. After a few rounds of exchange, "La division de l'assemblée se fit afin de savoir ceux qui étaient contents de la visite de Monsieur Clarke. J'en ai compté 13 pour lui. Donnons-lui quelques voix de plus même. Nous n'avons pas pu compter des nôtres. Le fait est que la maison de Salomon Jean Veine était trop petite."<sup>150</sup> Desperate, and faced with the prospect of losing the election again, Clarke had fallen in with Riel's opponents, and,

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<sup>146</sup> "Andre Nault, Amable Gaudry to Robert Cunningham July 24, 1873" MG3 D1 #205, SHSB.

<sup>147</sup> "Robert Cunningham to Louis Riel [n.d]" MG 3 D1 #229, SHSB. "I have been fighting with Lynch this week and can assure you that I have not been ashamed to define my position both as regards the cause you are associated with & yourself."

<sup>148</sup> "Letter to A.G.B. Banntyne, 28 August 1873," doc. #1-175, in *CWLR*, 278.

<sup>149</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 185.

<sup>150</sup> "Lettre à Joseph Dubuc, [n.d.] September 1873," doc. #1-178 in *CWLR*, 281.



taking advantage of the silence regarding the amnesty, orchestrated the arrest of Lepine.<sup>151</sup> The warrants for the arrest of Lepine and Riel were signed one month before the election.

Lepine was arrested 17 September 1873; Riel who had been tipped off, managed to escape. Riel immediately composed a public letter of protest. It was published in *Le Métis* (St. Boniface) on September 20th.<sup>152</sup> He accused the Canadian government of perjury.

Le Gouvernement Canadien qui l'a permise se parjure deux fois vis-à-vis de nous. D'abord il rompt les arrangements qu'il a autorisés à faire en son nom et que Sir John A. McDonald et Sir George E. Cartier ont réellement fait en son nom dans le mois de Mai 1870, avec le Juge Black, le Révérend Père Ritchot et Monsieur Alfred H. Scott, délégués du Gouvernement Provisoire d'Assiniboia. Ensuite le Gouvernement Canadien trahit la parole d'honneur de Notre Bien Aimé et Illustre Archevêque, Sa Grâce Monseigneur Taché... [qui] me donna au nom du Canada, sa parole d'honneur qu'aucun de nous ne serait jamais troublé ni inquiété...et qu'une amnistie générale serait proclamée.

Riel's reaction was not merely spontaneous, much of the letter was based upon the notes that he had already sent to Masson only a few months earlier. Two arguments were central: the promise made to the delegates of the Provisional Government, and the honour of the Archbishop Taché. Riel had been preparing for such an event for months, and his arguments would be elaborated over the next months. In the archives of the Riel family, there is a series of documents from the Canadian Secretary of State Richard W. Scott that summarize all capital offense actions since 1867 and seem to have been intended to be used as legal reasoning for the amnesty of Lepine and Riel.<sup>153</sup>

Riel's allies now rallied to his banner. On 21 September delegates from all the French parishes met in St. Boniface to discuss the arrest of Lepine, and after the meeting Joseph Royal wrote a long report on the Amnesty for *Le Métis*.<sup>154</sup> Three months later, on 22 December, Lepine

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<sup>151</sup> Dubuc wrote to Riel that Clarke was behind it. "Joseph Dubuc to Louis Riel, October 1873," MG3 D1 #218, SHSB.

<sup>152</sup> 20 September 1873, *Le Métis*.

<sup>153</sup> MG3/D2 5 #45, PAM.

<sup>154</sup> 29 September 1873, *Le Métis*.

was released upon an \$8,000 bail. The money was raised by the French-Canadian community, likely at the initiative of Joseph Royal via the St. Jean Baptiste Society. Royal also took up the responsibility of defending Lepine in court with Joseph-Adolphe Chapleau, a successful lawyer and prominent politician from Quebec who travelled west just for this purpose.

The extent of their organization was impressive and the grassroots mobilization had a domino effect upon national attention. On 6 October, Bishop Taché asked Bishop Louis-François Laflèche in Trois Rivières, Québec to “...encourager les rédacteurs de vos journaux à parler en faveur du Manitoba et à agiter la question de l’arrestation de Lépine et des perquisitions faites contre Riel.”<sup>155</sup> He included Riel’s “Protestation” with an entreaty to have it circulated: “Les faits qu’elle allègue sont vrais.” As a result, the “Protestation” was reprinted in Quebec newspapers: *Le Nouveau Monde* on 2 October and the *La Gazette de Sorel* on 4 October. *The Courier du Canada*, a Quebec newspaper, reported that the citizens of Hull held a public meeting to express their sympathy for Riel on 27 October.<sup>156</sup> Over the next few months *Le Métis* became the most important source of information for Quebec newspapers reprinting many of its articles concerning the arrest and trial of Lepine. “Optical Character Recognition” searches of Quebec newspapers suggest increasing attention to Riel’s activities: there is a spike in references to “Riel” and “Lepine” in 1873, a trend that continues until January 1875.<sup>157</sup> On 27 October 1873, the *Courrier du Canada* ran an article on Riel: “Riel passe à l’état de légende. Il est partout et n’est nulle part. Son nom suffit pour exciter des milliers, pour chauffer au rouge la rage des grits,

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<sup>155</sup> Quoted in Albert Tessier, “Correspondance Taché-Lafèche,” *Les Cahiers des Dix*, 23 (1958): 246.

<sup>156</sup> 27 October 1873, *Courrier du Canada*. “Les citoyens de Hull ont tenu une assemblée, pour témoigner de leur sympathies à l’égard de Riel.”

<sup>157</sup> It is important to note that the BANQ does not have information on important French Montreal papers like *Le Nouveau Monde*, *Le Franc Parleur*, *La Minerve*. Searching all newspapers one finds 2 references in 1872; 5 references in 1873; 18 in 1874; 43 in 1875 and 1 in 1876. A similar pattern, though of greater magnitude, is observed for “Riel” and “Lepine” independently. Searching *Le FrancParleur* for “Riel” on Paper of Record, which has a better OCR, for the period 1870 to 1878 we find zero references from 1870-2; 14 references in 1873; 42 in 1874; 22 in 1875; 2 in 1876; 2 in 1877 and 2 in 1878.

pour augmenter le respect de toute une province envers celui qu'elle considère comme son protecteur. De fait, Riel est tout un drapeau, il représente, il personifie un principe. Son nom, auprès de ses concitoyens, est le synonyme de bravoure, dévouement, protection."<sup>158</sup>

Riel was elected by acclamation on 13 October 1873. The growing network also arranged for Riel's safe travel to Montreal. As a wanted man (the Government of Ontario had placed a \$5,000 reward for his capture) his political allies detailed an itinerary of safe passages and houses for Riel to use during this dangerous trip from Red River to Canada via the US.

L'organisation tous avons cru devoir te donner un compagnon de ... qui ne devra pas jouer tes mouvements, mais qui deva aux différent stations ou barcadiers ou hotels faire les demarches requises pour prendre les billets de passages, et t'éviter le trouble de te presenter toi-même aux places voulues....le programme pour l'instant est que ce jeune homme se rend à Fargo vis-à-vis Moorhead et attend-là. Votre parti se dirige par la prairie dans les environs de Moorhead...et M. Xavier se rend seul et va rencontrer le jeune homme...<sup>159</sup>

Another letter advised him to stay at 510 Ste. Marie in Montreal and with the Oblates in Hull.<sup>160</sup>

Riel was also advised to adopt an "ordinary name," like David, for safety. He would be accompanied by the young French Canadian, Joseph Tassé. The involvement of Tassé, who had been reporting on Red River for the Montreal paper *Le Nouveau Monde*, illustrates how the transcontinental network of Catholic nationalists were taking an increasing interest in Riel. Tassé had been in indirect contact with Riel before, in 1871. Eustache Prud'homme, one of Riel's former classmates, had written to Riel on Tassé's behalf seeking information necessary for a book on the West.<sup>161</sup> And one of Tassé's first articles to be published was a biographical sketch in *L'Opinion Publique* of Louis Riel's father that ran over the 6th and 13th editions of March 1873. In this article Tassé described Louis Riel, the son, in 1873 in the following manner: "La

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<sup>158</sup> *Courrier du Canada*, 27 October 1873, 2.

<sup>159</sup> A series of instructions, unsigned but likely from Dubuc, is preserved: 17 October 1873, Riel correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #220, PAM.

<sup>160</sup> "LaRiviere to Riel, 17 October 1873," Riel correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 #221, SHSB.

<sup>161</sup> "Eustache Prud'homme to Louis Riel, 12 January 1871," MG3 D1 #72, SHSB.

jeunesse de l'agitateur, son éloquence, son influence sur les masses, l'audace de son entreprise, ses fautes mêmes, lui ont donné une part plus grande de l'attention publique depuis deux ans qu'il n'en a été donné au personnage le plus éminent du pays.”<sup>162</sup> The metaphor of social capital captures the nature of these relations in networks to accumulate—as Riel invested in social networking he increased his social capital, which could then be deployed in his public campaign. The network, based upon Riel's access to college networks, voluntary associations, politicians and their parties, family relations and church hierarchy, served to draw together disparate nodes into a common cause.

Even Taché, who had previously interceded to mitigate any rash actions on the part of the Métis leader, now refused to intervene. On 20 October 1873, Father Pierre Poulin sent a letter to Bishop Bourget in Montreal explaining Taché's view that Riel's presence would prove a just indictment for “Le Ministère” (the cabinet) who had done so little for Manitoba. He indicated, “Si l'amnistie était formellement accordée, peut-être Monsgr. ferait-il un effort auprès de Riel, mais il ne l'a pas promis.”<sup>163</sup> Despite the potential disruption, Poulin reassured the Bishop that there was little to fear in Riel's appearance in Ottawa, so long as plans were laid appropriately. Furthermore “Les populations canadiennes irlandaises sont bien unies pour le défendre.” When the Mackenzie and Dorion ministry replaced Macdonald's, Taché himself travelled to Ottawa to press the Amnesty issue again. On 20 November, he forwarded to Louis Riel a telegram he had just received from Fort Garry, regarding the bills against him and Lepine, and informed Riel that he had sent money to his family and encouraged him to rest.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> *L'Opinion Publique*, Montreal: 6 March 1873, and 13 March 1873.

<sup>163</sup> “P. Poulin à Bourget, 20 Oct 1873,” 255.109, Nord Ouest/St. Boniface (4) (1860-1875) Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal.

<sup>164</sup> “Taché à Riel, 17 November 1873,” MG3 D1 #222, SHSB.

The number of connections and the complexity of the various associations Riel juggled was remarkable. However, it was not just the formal letters, but also the person-to-person social encounters that held this network together. Riel wrote to Dubuc in August 1874, “PS. 29 Sept. 1874. Hier le Dr. Lachapelle a reçu de toi une lettre qu’il a bien voulu me faire voir. Cette lettre me montre si j’ai en toi un ami. Merci de tous les souhaits que tu me fais....Je viens de recevoir par Monseigneur une lettre de Ma Mère. Dans une de mes lettres précédentes je lui avais demandé de me dire si les gens étaient durs à ton égard. On me répond *que la plus part sont contents de toi*. Courage donc et Bonheur!!”<sup>165</sup> Lachapelle was confirming Dubuc’s loyalty and support for Riel. These kinds of third-party exchanges reinforced the value and membership of the network and made the network much stronger.

Irish, Franco-Manitoban, French-Canadian, and Métis networks were brought into play for the sake of bringing Riel safely to Ottawa. Unfortunately for Riel, the networks he was relying upon, based upon that careful mix of public and private interests, were fraying at the edges. During this period, 1872-1875, the Conservative party lost its moorings, and with the death of Cartier and Macdonald’s retreat from the public eye, it seemed to be floating rudderless. The 1873 Pacific Scandal had discredited the backroom dealing that had kept the liberal conservative consensus together and discredited this politics. New forces, embodied in the cabinet of Alexander Mackenzie, who was adamantly opposed to recognizing obligations of the government to the claims of minority interests, were now redistributing the social capital flowing within political circles.

#### **4.6 The Amnesty issue in Montreal**

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<sup>165</sup> “Lettre à Joseph Dubuc, 10-29 September 1874,” doc. #1-214, in *CWLR*, 1:386–94.

To create public pressure Riel began by reaching out to as many potential allies as possible. Riel and Royal joined forces to recruit the rising political and legal star Adolphe Chapleau, a conservative, who may have known Riel from his student days, to travel west in November to defend Lepine at his trial.<sup>166</sup> Riel also reached out to the influential Liberal parliamentarians. When he arrived in Montreal, he met Honoré Mercier, the representative for Rouville, who had taken up Riel's cause as that of French Canada at large. Mercier met with Riel in the house of M. Hubert[?] Paré and then together they travelled to Hull. Riel was still a fugitive from the Ontario police, but they crossed the river to Ottawa in the hope of getting Riel into his seat in parliament undetected. It is not entirely clear what happened: they arranged to let Riel enter the parliament by a side door, but according to Mercier the sudden appearance of someone scared Riel off.<sup>167</sup>

It would be another year before Riel would attempt to take his seat again. On 7 November, in the wake of the Pacific Scandal, Alexander Mackenzie dissolved parliament. In the interim to avoid unwanted attention in Canada, Riel decided to take refuge in the Oblate house at Plattsburg.<sup>168</sup> He soon decided that he would be more comfortable at the house of Fabien Barnabé, in Keeseville, New York. At this point he began to court Barnabé's sister Eveline.<sup>169</sup> He had little opportunity to rest however, when he arrived in early December letters were waiting for him.<sup>170</sup> Joseph Royal sent him congratulations on his election and an update on Royal's

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<sup>166</sup> Chapleau's biographer claims that Chapleau knew Riel from his days at college—I have not been able to determine how. According to the *DCB* Chapleau attended the *Collège Masson* and *Collège St Hyacinthe* where another Métis, Louis Schmidt, was sent. As a close friend of Rodrigue Masson (Sophie had also sponsored Chapleau's education), Chapleau, likely met Riel in Terrebonne.

<sup>167</sup> Honoré Mercier, *Discours prononcé par l'Honorable M. Mercier à l'Assemblée Législative de Québec le 7 Mars 1886*, Quebec: Imprimerie de l'électeur, 1886, 56.

<sup>168</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 198.

<sup>169</sup> The courtship went well, the two exchanged many letters and there was a promise of marriage. But when Riel left for the west in 1878, he gave up on this plan. This aspect of the story however surpasses the scope of this study.

<sup>170</sup> For these series of letters see #224, 226 & 228 PAM. He maintained a steady correspondence, in 1875 he wrote to his mother "Je suis arrivé à Albany chez Monsieur Lesage, Beau-frère de Monsieur Foucher. Quel plaisir ç'a été pour moi d'y trouver trois lettres." Louis Riel, "Lettre à Julie Riel," doc. # 1-242 in *CWLR*, 263.

preparations for the trial of Ambroise Lepine. Father Poulin sent news from St. Boniface and greetings from Archbishop Taché. An undated letter from Ambroise Lepine, may have also been written at this time: he expected to hear good news regarding his case, and sent greetings from the families in the settlement. On Christmas day, again back in Plattsburgh with the Oblates, he received a visit from the Father Albert Lacombe and Reverend Pierre Poulin. They brought greetings from the bishop of Montreal, Ignace Bourget, and set up a meeting for Riel in Montreal.<sup>171</sup> As a result, Riel crossed the border again and met with Bourget at the Hotel Dieu on 8 January 1874. This meeting would be the first of many, but it was particularly important for Riel, because he was sick and sought medical advice. Years later he would attribute his recovery to Bourget's miraculous power.<sup>172</sup> The ease with which his correspondents followed Riel during this period of frequent dislocation is a testament to the manner in which information flowed through the network.

On New Year's day 1874, he wrote to Taché from Plattsburgh that "notre question est bien plus tranquille," and he was planning to write to the papers and the Governor-General.<sup>173</sup> He also wrote to Marc Girard, Joseph Royal, Joseph Dubuc, and Alphonse A. C. Larivière and explained his interest in having something published on the Amnesty issue.<sup>174</sup>

The process that brought Riel's *Mémoire* to print is a fascinating lesson in political organization criss-crossing the British North American political project. It illustrates the value and complexity of networking in a transcontinental nation-state and, more importantly, how that infrastructure might be subverted by forces that were unintentionally entwined in the project. In

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<sup>171</sup> The details of this visit can be teased out from the letters Riel wrote to Archbishop Taché and Bishop Bourget in January 1874. See docs. #1-186, 1-187 & 1-190 in *CWLR*, 295-97 & 321-23.

<sup>172</sup> Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal 588.201. See also 1-190 "Lettre à Ignace Bourget" *Ibid.*, 1:231-32.

<sup>173</sup> Riel "Lettre à A.-A. Taché," doc. #1-186, in *Ibid.*, 295-96.

<sup>174</sup> Doc. 1-189, in *Ibid.*, 1:319-318. The letter is undated, but based on the context it can be dated to January 1874.

December 1873, Riel was preparing the campaign for public opinion.<sup>175</sup> Months later, Riel wrote to his friend Dubuc in July 1874: “Quand tu veux quelque chose, agite le peuple, crée une pression, de la pression voilà le levier. Ontario qui nous écrase comprend cela et je ne sais pas pourquoi nous autres nous ne nous servons pas assez de cette force-là.”<sup>176</sup> By uniting French Canadians with the Métis in the face of Ontario’s aggression (reinforced by his use of “nous”) Riel had achieved his goals. By the end of 1874 the Amnesty question was the most visible issue in Quebec’s public forum and would ignite a massive public opinion campaign. The following section discusses how that came about. It describes Riel’s efforts to insert himself into the public debates surrounding the Amnesty and the resources that he drew upon to accomplish that.

Riel also set out to re-establish old contacts from the college. Between January 1874 and June 1875 he received letters from Stanislaus Côte, Dr. E.-P. Lachapelle, Alphonse Benoit, Alexandre Deschamps, Lucien Proulx, and J.A. Girard: all college friends.<sup>177</sup> For example, Côte wrote on 25 January 1874:<sup>178</sup>

Mon cher Ami,

C’est la première fois que je t’écris, j’ai mal fait de ne t’avoir pas adressé au moins quelque petite lettre avant aujourd’hui. J’ai pourtant une excuse, [...] ou te trouve? Je crains d’être le seul de tes anciens confrères de Collège qui n’...[?] pas soulagé[?] son mot de sympathie. J’ai souvent demandé ton adresse personne la savait. Enfin ces jours derniers Mr. Joseph Tassé m’a dit qu’il connaît ton adresse...

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<sup>175</sup> An anonymous and undated document in the Riel fonds appears to be notes for a campaign. It opens in midsentence, “...préparer, organizer, voir et prévoir, [...] et doit être l’occupation de tous; nous nous sommes réunies entendus et tout marche comme noblement.” The letter also speaks of Riel’s recent departure for Ottawa, implying that it was written in October 1873.

<sup>176</sup> Doc. #1-203, in *CWLR*, 370–71.

<sup>177</sup> See Riel correspondence and Papers MG3 D1 PAM. These friends also passed on greetings from other college alumni: classmates included Chevrier, Primeau, Stanislaus Coté (January 25, 1874), Alexandre Deschamps, and Alphonse Benoit (April 7 1874); fellow members of the Congregation St. Vierge included Lucien Proulx (March 2, 1874) and J.A. Girard (April 23, 1874).

<sup>178</sup> Côte à Riel, 25 January 1874, MG3 D1 #236 PAM.



In addition to summarizing his own life, Côte also described what he knew of their former classmates.<sup>179</sup> The letter, recounting the life events of a long list of friends, shows a conscious effort to maintain or renew older ties.

Two days after the letter from Côte arrived, Riel received a message from another former classmate E.-P. Lachapelle.<sup>180</sup> His letter contained exciting news: a publisher, Alphonse Desjardins of *Le Nouveau Monde*, was interested in publishing Riel's *Mémoire*. Alphonse Desjardins of Hochelaga (*not* the founder of the *caisse populaire*) was already actively taking an interest in Riel's situation and offered his home, on Dorchester 758—just behind the new St. Jacques Cathedral (now Marie Reine du Monde), as a place of refuge.<sup>181</sup> Riel must have been warmly welcomed for, months later, Riel wrote of his fondness for Desjardins' wife and children, while Desjardins replied that his children also asked after the man with the dark beard.<sup>182</sup> Desjardins had access to a press and was closely linked with the ultramontane movement in Quebec. He had helped write the *Programme* of 1871 and was also a principal

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<sup>179</sup> "J'ai laissé le collège de Montreal le 27 fevrier 1866. J'ai completé mon [...] chez les R.R.P.P. Jesuites, celui qui me faisait la classe était le père de Mazzini, frère de célèbre chef de franc maçons....Je fus admis Bachelier en loi B.C.L. puis avocat. J'ai pratiqué pendant 18 mois, ...mais j'ai faillé... Je mis une autre corde a mon arc et jete dans la tenure des livres... ...Dajenais et Janel sont mort avec la soutane[?]. Tu sais ou sont Paré et Deschamps...Theophil Giroux est vicaire je ne sais où. Gendrault est curé à Compton ou Acton...Guernon est medecin pratiquant à Chateauguay, il porte maintenant le nom de Guerion Lucier par reconnaissance pour son protecteur. Alphonse Benoit occupe un poste gouvernementale à Quebec, Alphonse Houle ... avocat. Doherty est Médécin et marié à une D[emoise]lle Nesbitt de Quebec. Beauchamps est médécin a Chicoutimé....McLaughlin est curé dans le diocese de Burlington. ... McGill est un des meilleurs prédicateurs de la nouvelle Angleterre. Plante pratique comme médécin a Montréal....Lachapelle aussi...Aza Bissonette est mort. Dazé est O.M.I. et procureur au college des Oblats à Ottawa..."

<sup>180</sup> "Lachapelle to Riel 29 January, 1874." MG3 D1 #237 PAM. "Depuis que je t'ai écrit. Je ne suis pas resté inactif: J'ai pouvoir aux moyens d'assurer la publication de ton mémoire et je peux t'assurer qu'il sera publie mardi prochain dans le *Nouveau Monde*."

<sup>181</sup> Desjardins used the house, on the site of the current hotel Victoria, to frequently host large parties and entertain. See Leon Trépanier, "Figures de Maires: Alphonse Desjardins," *Les Cahiers des Dix*, vol. 23 (1858): 261-283; Joseph Desjardins, *Le Sénateur Alphonse Desjardins, Journaliste et Homme Public, 1841-1912*, Editions du Messager Canadien (Montreal, 1944).

<sup>182</sup> See Riel's letters of 3 June 1873 and 24 July 1874, #1-199 & #1-205 Riel, *CWLR*, 365-366-373. See Desjardin's letter to Riel June 1874, MG 3 D1 #256 PAM.

organizer of the Zouave movement in 1868.<sup>183</sup> The link with Desjardins would prove to be crucial to Riel's campaign.

*L'Amnistie: Mémoire sur les causes des troubles du Nord-Ouest et sur les négociations qui ont amené leur règlement amiable* (published in English as "The Amnesty: Memoir on the causes of the troubles in the Northwest and the negotiations that brought about their amicable settlement") appeared at the end of January 1874. It was reprinted or reported in almost all the major newspapers.<sup>184</sup> The ultramontane press *Le Nouveau Monde*, republished it as a two-page article on 4 February 1874. It was then reprinted in *Le Métis* on 28 February, *L'Opinion Publique* on 19 February 1874, *La Minerve* on 5 February 1874, the *Montreal Witness* on 7 February 1874, the *Globe* and the *Franc Parleur* on 6 February 1874, *La Gazette de Sorel* on 11 February 1874, *Le Courrier du Canada* on 9 February 1874, *Le Courrier de St. Hyacinthe* on 10 February 1874, the *Montreal Gazette* on 6 February 1874, *Le Canadien* on 6 February 1874, and *Le Journal de Trois Rivières* on 12 February 1874.

Riel's *Mémoire* was a "simple narration des principaux faits accomplis durant nos troubles" in the Northwest. With this narrative, and the words of Lord Granville, Riel placed the blame squarely on the Canadians who began "une lutte contre nous." He asked rhetorically, "Ces hommes nous attaquaient injustement, illégalement au nom du gouvernement Canadien. Ils ne respiraient que la guerre....Avons-nous fait guerre pour guerre?" In Riel's account the Canadians offended both the Company and the original settlers (*anciens colons*), but it was the "Métis" that organized the response and defence of their country (*pays*). Riel did not define or explain who the Métis are, but described how they formed a "National Committee," communicated with the

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<sup>183</sup> Desjardins, *Le Sénateur Alphonse Desjardins, Journaliste et Homme Public, 1841-1912*. He was made a Knight of the Order of Pius IX in recognition of his service.

<sup>184</sup> Available online at *Early Canadiana*, URL: <http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.30457/2?r=0&s=1>. Published as pamphlet in January 1874, numerous copies of it survive in different archives. See also *CWLR*, 298-317.

Canadian envoy, and defended the country when attacked by Canadian authorities. Riel argued for the legitimate sovereignty of this government, recognized as such by the British authorities, the Canadian authorities, and the Canadian government. He quoted a promise of amnesty made by their agent Donald Smith at a public meeting on 19 January and presented “official” letters intended to prove the legitimacy of the government’s actions. Riel repeated the argument that amnesty was the *sina qua non* of negotiations with the Canadian government.<sup>185</sup> The terms Riel used to describe the Métis organization (committee, government, deputies, etc...) were intended to communicate to Canadians the legitimacy and legality of their actions. Riel emphasized the loyalty and the “civilization” of the Métis by pointing to the formality of their political organization and their respect for “European” symbols of authority: the Métis defended the Fort; the Métis respected British justice by ceding the courtroom for the regular proceedings of the Quarterly Court even in the midst of the troubles; and the Métis protected the public books and money.

The text repeated many of the arguments contained in the notes he sent to Masson in the summer of 1872 and from his formal “Protestation” of October 1873. Correspondence with Bishop Taché, Joseph Dubuc, Ambroise Lepine, and other key figures in Red River politics also allowed Riel to refine and focus his message. He also had the professional support of a well-established press and its editor Alphonse Desjardins, not to mention his old college friend E.-P. Lachapelle. The letter had been shaped by years of editing and reflection.

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<sup>185</sup> The first instance of this condition as a *sina qua non*, that I have found, is “Lettre à Alexander Morris, 3 January 1873” doc. #1-157 in *CWLR*, 235. The phrase is also repeated in the English translation of this letter “Memorial to His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor of Manitoba,” published in the *Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties*, see also doc. #1-158, *CWLR*, 248. It was also repeated in the *Mémorial of the People of Rupert’s Land* to Ulysses Grant, previously attributed to Louis Riel, but actually authored by William B. O’Donoghue.

It is worth emphasizing the agency Riel accords to this group called the “Métis.” Using the form “nous,” Riel can speak from the first person. This “nous” is clearly not French Canadian, but Métis, and asserting their own national identity. Speaking from this position was not something that French Canadians could do, and therefore advocates like Joseph Dubuc relied upon Riel to make this argument. In the first person plural this argument had a resonance that transcended the interests of Quebecois, but instead became a universal appeal to justice and righteousness. The alliance between French Canadians and the Métis was a rhetorical position that was advantageous to both the political elite in Quebec and the Northwest.

Under Desjardins’ protection, on 12 March 1874, Riel also published in the *Nouveau Monde* a rebuttal of a public letter penned by Dr. James Lynch, an old ally of Dr. John Schultz. Lynch had attacked Riel’s government and denounced him as a murderer. Riel’s letter debunked Lynch’s arguments according to a straightforward method of re-statement and reply. Riel’s conclusion was simple: “Le Dr Lynch ne respecte pas ses lecteurs; il compte sur des sympathies nationales pour les tromper.”<sup>186</sup> It was a standard argument for Riel, to point out the narrow nationalist interests of his opponents. But, in general, this retort was plodding and lacked the force of the previous *Mémoire*.

The *Mémoire* was also an opportunity for Riel to raise some money. An undated note in the Desjardins archive reveals that he was selling the pamphlet *Le Mémoire de M. Louis Riel de l’Amnestie* for 10 cents and all proceeds were to go to “M. Louis Riel.”<sup>187</sup> This fortuitous discovery suggests that Riel had used his writing on other occasions to support himself. There is

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<sup>186</sup> Doc. #1-191, *CWLR*, 323–28.

<sup>187</sup> Fonds Desjardins, Correspondence CLF 19 Series 1 D7, BANQ.

no evidence to make a more comprehensive statement to this effect, but it does shed further light on how Riel supported himself over the years.<sup>188</sup>

While the campaign in Quebec had been launched earlier, Riel's intervention in January 1874 galvanized the situation. By the end of March, Taché, who until now had contented himself with patient protests to the government and despite cautions by his colleagues in the Church, also published his statement on the Amnesty.<sup>189</sup> In his essay entitled simply *L'Amnestie*, Taché made little to no reference to the Métis or national rights. Instead, he spoke about "les habitants du nord-ouest," and focussed on the letters between Lord Young and Granville and the acts of Canadian politicians. Taché's essay, constructed around three key questions, provides a useful contrast with Riel's *Mémoire* because they both emphasize personal experiences. While Riel argues that Métis actions were legitimate before the eyes of international state power, Taché argues that his own honor and reputation were at stake as he had promised the amnesty based upon his meetings with the Canadian government.

During the winter of 1873-4, Riel's network grew as he extended his relationships with French Canadians in Quebec. Investments of time and labour paid off in terms of closer and stronger ties to a particularly powerful network of ultramontanes in Montreal. It had been created by clerics like Bourget and directed by secular authorities like Desjardins. This ultramontane network, embedded within a particularly dynamic human collective, would provide the means to access the hearts and minds of thousands inhabiting this newly confederated British North

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<sup>188</sup> It specifically casts some doubt on Flanagan's claim that Riel did not make any wages or salary and chiefly supported himself with land speculation. Thomas Flanagan, "Louis Riel's Land Claims," *Manitoba History* 21, no. 9 (Spring 1991), <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/>.

<sup>189</sup> Writing to L.-F. Laflèche in 9 May 1874 "Les Très Honorable John A. a menti (excusez le mot) comme ferait un voyou...J'ai songé un circulaire au clergé dans le but d'encourager l'émigration au Manitoba, seul moyen de nous sauver." Quoted in Albert Tessier, "Correspondance Taché-Laflèche," *Les Cahiers Des Dix*, 23 (1958): 247.

American space. It was exhilarating for Riel to tap into Montreal's vast network and forge social relationships that were well beyond the grasp of most Métis in the Northwest.

#### **4.7 An Ultramontane metropolis**

The city had changed a great deal since he had been a student, but in other ways it was still the same city that he recognized and one that welcomed him. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the rapid industrialization and urbanization which had made Montreal the workshop of British North America was now revealing its darker side. The emerging social, religious and moral problems of a rapidly expanding urban centre were proportional to the construction of railroads and canals, and the emergence of modern banking. As the markets developed and capital accumulated there was greater inequality.<sup>190</sup> Changes in the nature of labour and labour relationships meant there were fewer opportunities to move from apprentice to master and a new working class was taking shape.<sup>191</sup> Mobility within and into the city had also disrupted many of the older forms of association.<sup>192</sup> In Montreal, the problems of a modern capitalist economy were exposed in their most raw form, causing great concern for the religious and social authorities. For many it seemed as if the traditional links that held society together were being eroded by the forces of individualism and capitalism. As the poverty and other social "evils" were identified, cries for increasing intervention in "social" affairs resonated powerfully.

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<sup>190</sup> A conservative Victorian political culture justified the social elites control over the transfer of capital to themselves. Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government*; Sweeney, *Why Did We Choose to Industrialize?*, 311–36. The increasing disparity between social classes is well illustrated by the drawing up of marriage contracts. Bettina Bradbury, *Wife to Widow: Lives Laws, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 67.

<sup>191</sup> Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

<sup>192</sup> Sherry Olson and Patricia Thorton, *Peopling the North American City: Montreal 1840-1900* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

Reacting to the liberalism of the early nineteenth century, Bishop Bourget had emerged as a paradigmatic architect of a new social order.<sup>193</sup> To the great consternation of the Sulpicians, between 1866-1867, Bourget broke up the sprawling parish of Montreal into six new parishes. Envisioning an alternate form of modern society, Bourget founded numerous institutions of charity, schools and banks as a means of dealing with social disintegration. He applied equal pressure to the public sphere and used a heavy hand to control and guide nineteenth-century voluntary associations. The clash with the liberal literary society the *Institut Canadien* and its editor Joseph Guibord is a well-known example of this confrontation.<sup>194</sup> In the summer of 1869, while all the troubles were starting in Red River, Bishop Bourget, angered at the secular and free-thinking institution, condemned its *Annuaire* and members: “He who persists in the desire to remain in the said Institut or to read or merely possess the above-mentioned yearbook without being so authorized by the Church deprives himself of the sacraments at the hour of his death.”<sup>195</sup> Instead Bourget promoted the establishment of other associations more amenable to the interventionist church such as the *St. Jean-Baptiste Society*, the *Institut Canadien-français*, and the *Cabinet de Lecture Paroissial*. He also engaged with the free press. During the 1860s, under pressure from Catholic censors appointed by Bourget, the more radical liberal papers like *L’Avenir* and *Le Pays* were attacked. Others such as *Les Melanges Religieux* were celebrated by Bourget for taking up the religious critiques in political society.<sup>196</sup> *Le Nouveau Monde*, who employed Godefroy Lamarche as its censor, was considered the voice of Bourget and the

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<sup>193</sup> Perin, *Ignace de Montréal*. For more on Bourget’s extensive influence on the development of Montreal see Bradbury, *Wife to Widow: Lives Laws, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Montreal*; Brian J. Young, *The Politics of Codification: The Lower Canadian Civil Code of 1866* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994).

<sup>194</sup> Yvan Lamonde, *Gens de Parole: Conférences Publiques, Essais et Débats À l’Institut Canadien de Montréal, 1845-1871* (Montréal: Boréal, 1990).

<sup>195</sup> Quoted in Jean-Roch Rioux, “Joseph Guibord,” *DCB*.

<sup>196</sup> Yvan Lamonde, *Louis-Antoine Dessaulles, 1818 - 1895: un seigneur libéral et anticlérical* (Anjou, Québec: Fides, 2014), 170–85. For a general history on the press in Quebec see André Beaulieu and Jean Hamelin, *La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours*, vol. 1 (Quebec: Les Presses de l’Université de Laval, 1973).

ultramontane church. These associations and presses were institutionalized networks capable of generating vast amounts of social capital.

The “spirit of 1872,” a sweeping critique associated with the ultramontane movement, plugged new energy into the system.<sup>197</sup> The ultramontane critique combined with nationalism to anchor society tossed in a sea of change. Their arguments, defending the importance of social association were rooted in the teachings of the Catholic Church. It would take the conservative party, and Macdonald in particular, years to realize what he was missing out on—the social was political.<sup>198</sup> But the economic depression following 1873 revealed the weakness of Macdonald and Cartier’s version of clientelist politics, their party could not survive without the easy flow of cash. In the context of the “spirit of 1872” Riel’s message to the public that the Métis had been abused by the political system should have resonated well. The problem was there were just so many other voices crying foul. Through the ultramontane connection, the Amnesty issue became part of a broader social critique of liberalism that was increasingly powerful in the public sphere.

Many of Riel’s close friends were from this ultramontane network and were familiar with the tactics of translating public opinion into political power. Alphonse Desjardins was one of the authors of the ultramontane manifesto, the *Programme Catholique* of 1871.<sup>199</sup> Riel was also linked to clerical supporters of the programme Bishop Ignace Bourget, Louis-François Laflèche,

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<sup>197</sup> The term “spirit of 1872” was used to summarize the energy Alphonse Desjardins brought to the ultramontane movement. Paul Linteau, “Alphonse Desjardins (1841-1912),” *DCB*. Ultramontanism sought to liberate society from the “yoke” of Gallicanism. Étienne Parent advised in “Considérations sur le sort des classes ouvrières” (1852): “Étudiez bien le Catholicisme... et vous verrez que c’est le système relégieux le plus favorable au peuple, ou ... le plus démocratique qu’il y ait, et qu’il y ait jamais eu au monde.” Quoted in Fecteau, *La Liberté Du Pauvre*, p. 271.

<sup>198</sup> Macdonald returned to power in 1878 on the idea of a “National Policy” which involved a high tariff on manufactures. As he had hoped it gained him the support of the “working man.” Elsbeth Heaman calls it the “revolt against liberalism,” *Tax, Order, and Good Government*, 118-148.

<sup>199</sup> See Paul-Andre Linteau, “Alphonse Desjardins,” *DCB*. Other authors were Cleophas Beausoleil, François-Xavier Trudel, and Joseph Charles Taché.



and A.-A. Taché. Outside this better known group, other supporters, including Joseph Royal, Joseph Dubuc, Rodrigue Masson, and Joseph Tassé, also had ties to the ultramontane circle.

Leaders of public opinion intervened by extending their influence into the urban and rural parishes in a web of communications held together by local *curés* and pastoral *mandemants*. The Zouave campaign of 1868 provides the best instance of a clerical strategy to employ this network in social agitation and to consolidate the authority of the church.<sup>200</sup> The Zouave campaign would serve as model for “La cause du Nord-Ouest.” Responding to the invasion of Italy by the liberal-nationalist forces under Garibaldi, young Catholic men from all over the world, volunteered to defend Rome and the Pope. When Victor Emmanuel captured Rome in 1870, and in response to Bourget’s pressure, Quebec local parishes competed to raise the money required to outfit their volunteers and send them to defend the honour of the Pope.

A copy of a printed form sent in December 1867, to all of the parishes illustrates the sophistication of the committee that was struck to organize the campaign.<sup>201</sup> It was accompanied by a generic circular addressed to “Monsieur le Curé” explaining the purpose. As they wrote “Ne serait-il pas très-désirable que chaque paroisse du Canada fût représentée dans le corps qui est en voie de formation?” The form left blank lines for the curé to specify the number of cadets, volunteers, or others, as well as cash on hand, promises of monies to be sent in 6 months or in one year. A second blank form was intended to include a list of the names of volunteers, their roles, their age, physical measurements, “santé,” and their occupation. These circulars were sent to each parish. The secretary of the committee, Joseph Royal, also made an English translation to

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<sup>200</sup> Hardy, *Les Zouaves: une stratégie du clergé Québécois au XIXe siècle*.

<sup>201</sup> Secrétaires du comité Canadien des Zouaves Pontificaux, “Ciculaire,” 796.001 1867.3 Archives de la Chancellerie Archidiocèse de Montreal.

be sent to Upper Canada, and another French version for parishes in the United States.<sup>202</sup> The reports for another collection made in Montreal in January 1869 shows that \$5235.10 in cash and “argent payable” was raised. Far more impressive were the number of participants: a total 121 parishes, individuals and religious institutions participated, contributing between \$1.30 and \$187.37 each.<sup>203</sup> Through the parishes the organization committee had the ability to reach a broad swathe of the population.

For Rene Hardy “les incitations du clergé à prendre parti pour le pouvoir temporel du pape apparaissent comme un volet de la stratégie destinée à contrer la progression de la conception libérale de l’organisation sociale. Le levé d’un contingent de Zouaves en 1868 s’inscrit dans la poursuite des mêmes objectifs.”<sup>204</sup> In addition to collaborating with local elites, the clergy controlled a vast arsenal of lectures, chants, processions, literature, and schools that would be deployed in this effort to encourage popular participation. While soldiers only numbered in the low hundreds, the popular nature of the fundraising campaign, extending through the parish system to the grassroots of society, meant that it affected thousands. Equally important to note is that some of the principal organizers of this committee Joseph Royal, Alphonse Desjardins, François-Xavier-Anselme Trudel, and Canon Godefroy Lamarche became intensely interested in Riel’s cause.

Not narrowly nationalist in their focus, the ultramontanes addressed many issues outside of Quebec to stir up social critique of the government. The New Brunswick schools question, where Catholics claimed their “right” to an education system independent from the Protestants,

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<sup>202</sup> See “Circulaire anglais,” 796.001 867.4 and “Circulaire faisant appel aux Etats-Unis,” 796.001 867.5 Archives de la Chancellerie Archdiocese de Montreal.

<sup>203</sup> “Collect pour les zouaves faite avant le departe de Mgr de Montréal pour Rome – Janvier 1869,” 796.001 1869-38.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

filled the newspapers with reports and opinion pieces. Conflicts like these revealed the split between the moderate conservatives and the more radical ultramontanes. It was this debate which would distinguish Rodrigue Masson's independent and more idealistic stance from the Liberal-Conservative party created by Macdonald and Cartier.<sup>205</sup> When Cartier died, the new Conservative leader, Louis Hector Langevin could not inspire the same kind of loyalty and support amongst the party.<sup>206</sup> He refused to intervene on the issue of funding Catholic public schools and thus lost the support of many ardent ultramontanes who made up the tenuous conservative alliance forged by Cartier. Rodrigue Masson would replace Langevin as leader of the conservative opposition against the new Liberal government of Alexander Mackenzie because of his strong ultramontane positions.

As idealists disappointed in the moderate stance of Cartier-Macdonald alliance, the ultramontanes appealed to public opinion for their political power. These alternative forms of capital that the Catholic church generated through their nationalist associations, printing presses and movements like the Zouave campaign were precisely the kind of social capital Riel was looking for. Riel moved through Montreal society making friends and social contacts, with remarkably little cash. As an alternative to the material capital of railroad magnates the ultramontane capital that Riel accessed in Montreal sheds explanatory light on the influence Riel was able to wield in the project of Confederation.

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<sup>205</sup> Andrée Desilets, "Masson, Louis-Rodrigue," in *DCB*.

<sup>206</sup> Cleophas Beausoleil's letter to Alphonse Desjardins speaks of the sense of betrayal by the ultramontanes, "Si c'était une homme comme M Cartier, il serait facile de restreindre mais Langevin ne renoncera jamais à sa haine, et s'il fait faire des demarches aujourd'hui croyez-bien qu'il ne s'agit que de taillonner le Nouveau Monde au moment où les *better terms* et les écoles vont venir sur le tapis... [for French-Canadians under Langevin] il est beaucoup plus important de sauver le ministère et de concilier les mécontent[s] du Nouveau Brunswick que de sauvegarder les intérêts de leur coreligionnaires et le fond principe de la liberté de l'Eglise. Voilà où Langevin veut tous nous amener." Cleophas Beausoleil to Alphonse Desjardins, 25 March 1873 Correspondence, Fonds Alphonse Desjardins in CLG 19 Series 1 D3, BANQ.

## 4.8 Expulsion and re-election

Step by step, Riel and his allies in the ultramontane circle applied public pressure on the government to force a decision on the amnesty. The real fireworks were still to come. He would make a largely symbolic, but proportionately effectual gesture of defiance by taking his seat as a representative of the people in the House of Commons.

The federal seat in Provencher was easily secured by Riel's friends and allies for him in February 1874. At the end of March, despite the \$5,000 reward for his capture and against the advice of his friends,<sup>207</sup> Riel, for the second time travelled to Hull, this time with Romuald Fiset, member of parliament for Rimouski and a graduate from the *Collège de Montréal*. There he had at least one interview with J. A. Girard<sup>208</sup> and may have stayed at the Oblate house where Alphonse Dazé was the procurator. Both were former classmates from the Collège. On 30 March he presented himself in Parliament, signed the register, and then slipped back across the border to Quebec. The Ontario papers were outraged. This act of defiance was reported in papers across the United States.<sup>209</sup> Parliament was thrown into uproar, a mob gathered outside and the militia was called out. A motion was passed to have a police officer on hand in the future; another was passed to force Riel to take his seat or be expelled from his seat, and be considered a fugitive from justice. The next day the public galleries were full of spectators hoping to catch a glimpse of the infamous refugee. But Riel had no desire to face an angry mob, and six days later, he was expelled from Parliament by a vote of 124 against 68. He had achieved his goal of forcing the amnesty issue onto the floor of the House of Commons. On 1 April, a Committee was appointed

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<sup>207</sup> "Emmanuel Lachapelle to Alphonse Desjardins March 26, 1874," MG3 D1 #241, PAM.

<sup>208</sup> "J.A. Girard to Louis Riel April 23, 1874" MG3 D1 #245 PAM.

<sup>209</sup> A search of Proquest's database was helpful. A few examples will suffice *Kingston Daily Freeman* (New York, New York), 31 March 1874; *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* (Wisconsin) 31 March 1874; *Little Rock Daily Republican* (Arkansas) 31 March 1874. Over the next few days the drama was described in greater detail. "Poor Riel" *Inter Ocean* (Chicago, Illinois), 1 April 1874, 5; "The Case of Riel" *Bangor Daily Whig and Courier* (Maine) 4 April 1874, 2.

to investigate the “Causes of the Difficulties in the North-West Territory in 1869-70.” It would report its findings on 22 May 1874.

With Amnesty at the centre of public debate Riel returned to St. Paul, Minnesota. He wrote to his mother on 22 May 1874:

Nous avons des amis en Canada, beaucoup d’amis. Il serait impossible d’énumérer le nombre de ceux qui m’ont prié de vous faire leurs respects et à toute la famille, à tous les défenseurs de nos droits, à tant de Métis qu’ils ne connaissent pas personnellement mais qu’ils sont fiers de voir si bien se conduire. Chère Maman, j’ai vu Madame Masson qui vous fait ses respects ainsi qu’à mes soeurs, et qui saluent mes petits frères. Mon oncle John Lee et ma tante Lucie et ma cousine Lucie, leur fille vous font leurs meilleurs souhaits avec leurs respects.<sup>210</sup>

With pride, Riel advised his mother that he had sent her “cent piastres” via Emmanuel Lachapelle to Joseph Dubuc, and that another hundred was on the way. He had earned this money through sales of his *Mémoire* and the generosity of Montrealers.

In the same optimistic tone he wrote a long letter to his friend Joseph Dubuc explaining,

A la vérité, nous avons souffert que ce traité fût violé, mais encore cette violation du traité par le Canada a rangé de notre côté peu à peu les sympathies du nord-ouest de sorte qu’aujourd’hui toute la population métisse Canadienne de Manitoba et du nord-ouest se comprend [la violation du traité par le Canada] sans avoir eu de communications régulières et bien expresses entre ses différents groupes. Bien plus, Tout Québec Maintenant plus que jamais a pris fait et cause avec nous. Je puis presque le dire, notre cause agite la confédération canadienne d’un océan à l’autre. Elle gagne donc, tous les jours....La chambre m’a expulsé...Mais vous en m’élisant et moi en faisant ce que j’ai fait nous avons créé sur le gouvernement et tout le peuple une pression très avantageuse à notre cause.<sup>211</sup>

He had done it, Quebec was behind them (*tout Québec...plus que jamais*), and he had shaken the foundations of confederation (*d’un océan à l’autre*). This was the pressure he was looking for. The expulsion was simply the means to an end—moreover, Riel was already planning to be re-elected.

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<sup>210</sup> Doc. #1-195, in *CWLR*, 351–52.

<sup>211</sup> “Lettre à Dubuc, 27 May 1874,” doc. #1-197 *Ibid.*, 354–59.

George Stanley suggests that Riel was swept up by the ultramontane movement. A “local” issue was confused by the rivalry between the liberals and the conservatives—in fact, according to Stanley, the words he was using were not his own.<sup>212</sup> The issue had become one of French not of Métis survival. Arthur Silver also argues that Quebec used Riel’s amnesty cause to make its own complaint against Confederation, but does not consider Riel’s own interests in creating this pressure.<sup>213</sup> Nor does Silver describe just how effective Riel was in generating a momentum at this early stage. He writes, “there were, to be sure, protests in Quebec—but protests of a wearied sort.” In the end, Silver discounted the affinities in favour of an argument for racial difference.<sup>214</sup> In the balance, looking at Riel’s writing and the reactions in the press shows his careful insertion of a conglomerate identity “métisse canadien français,” a concept that would eventually develop its own hyphenated form. This combined with his tentative alliance with the St. Jean Baptiste Societies in the Northwest and in the East suggests that Riel was very well aware of the dangers of assimilation, but also saw the advantages.

Riel, perhaps aware of the racial difference Silver writes about, was careful to keep the interests of the Métis distinct, but allied to those of Quebecois. “Métisse canadien” served as a mnemonic device to that end. Furthermore, as Riel learned about the complexity, and blurring of what seemed on the surface to be a clear bi-partisan affair, he grew wary of “les canadiens français”.

Riel’s efforts to win the unqualified support of the St. Jean Baptiste Society in Montreal were hampered by the fact that many French-Canadians were not so eager to join the Métis. In

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<sup>212</sup> Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 209.

<sup>213</sup> Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation*, 86-88.

<sup>214</sup> He writes “The Métis might be French and Catholic, and likely friends for the Quebeckers. But they were also half-savage, and their country was a wild and inhospitable one, which would not soon be settled, and which was already too much of a burden on Canadian taxpayers.” *Ibid.* 88.

June 1864, the largest ever assembly of members of the St. Jean Baptiste Society across the North American continent assembled in Montreal.<sup>215</sup> There were over 18,000 people, many of them from American associations. Riel, still a refugee in the United States, also sent his support, and that of the Métis, to the president Judge Michel Charles-Joseph Coursol:

Monsieur,

Je suis heureux d'offrir l'hommage de mon respect au président de la Société St J Bte de Montréal et à tous les présidents des autres Sociétés St JBte réunis aujourd'hui en cette belle ville. Je félicite les canadiens français de célébrer comme peuple notre fête nationale d'une manière aussi digne, aussi grandiose. ...Les Métis Canadiens français du Nord sont une branche de l'arbre Canadien français; ils veulent grandir comme cet arbre, avec cet arbre, ne point se détacher de lui, souffrir et se réjouir avec lui.<sup>216</sup>

Riel drew his reader's attention to "l'arbre Canadien français," but this claim of attachment, or of shared interests was not so easily accepted by everyone. Coursol may have received the letter too late or he simply refused to read it at the General Convention, but he made his position clear when it was proposed by one member that Riel should have a seat at the permanent committee representing the Métis. There was loud opposition to the motion, and the president blocked it to calm the schism.<sup>217</sup> Riel's supporters made a second effort at the end of the meeting, and proposed a motion to send a formal request to the government to resolve the amnesty issue and a formal note of sympathy to Riel. Again there was too much opposition, and the meeting ended without any resolution. In Canada, the voluntary societies were split, worried about offending their Anglophone liberal allies.

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<sup>215</sup> Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de La Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal: Des Patriotes Au Fleur de lisé, 1834-1948* (Montreal: L'Aurore, 1975).

<sup>216</sup> Doc. #1-201 *CWLR*, 368–69. The editors of the *Collected Works* suggest that Riel was in St. Paul when he wrote this. Given the date and the context it seems more likely that he was already back in New York. The original of this letter cannot be found. The letter is dated June 24 and it is not clear where Riel was at the time. The letter merely indicates "United States." Perhaps he had given this letter to another Franco-American, such as Edmond Mallet, who was travelling to the General Convention held in 1874.

<sup>217</sup> For the debate surrounding Riel's presence at the convention see Rumilly, *Histoire de La Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal*, 100–105.

Some of the concern of Quebec public opinion leaders was undoubtedly tied to the complex consideration of colonisation and emigration. Some nationalists like Jules-Paul Tardivel worried about weakening by dilution the one secure French province—they pointed to the fate of Louisiana.<sup>218</sup> Tardivel maintained that emigration to the west was a scourge. For advocates of the Northwest, like Louis Riel and Bishop Taché, French-Canadian immigration was necessary to defend the rights of the bilingual province of Manitoba. Taché had been struggling to convince his compatriots of this since the 1870s.<sup>219</sup> When Joseph Royal visited Montreal in 1873 he wrote back to Taché,

J'ai obtenu de M. Pop[!] l'impression des milliers d'exemplaires d'un grand placard affiche d'emigration que j'ai préparé, ainsi que d'une brochure sur Manitoba; j'ai vu les agents d'immigration de la province de Québec; ils sont très-bien disposés et vont nous aider; je vais bientôt discuter à Quebec pour organiser la distribution de ces affiches et brochures... Mais je sais ... cette mission à Ottawa a d'importance et pour la solution des nos intérêts[?] nationales[?] et religieux, ainsi que pour mon propre avenir.<sup>220</sup>

At the St. Jean-Baptiste Society meeting in June 1874, Father André Lacombe, with Taché and Bourget's blessings, had called for the establishment of a special committee to organize French-Canadian emigration to the west. A colonisation society was formed in 1876.<sup>221</sup> Taché was not simply a propagandist for the idea, he actively encouraged the investment of capital in the region by acting as an agent for numerous investors from Canada East. People from Montreal asked him

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<sup>218</sup> Pierre Savard, *Jules-Paul Tardivel, la France et les États-Unis, 1851–1905* (Québec: Les Presses de l'université de Laval, 1967).

<sup>219</sup> "Monseigneur Taché est de nouveau en Canada, parcourant nos belles paroisses, sollicitant des secours pour les malheureux colons de la Rivière-Rouge. Dans un sermon à Saint Hyacinthe, il a dit un mot sur les difficultés et les consolations du missionnaire de ces contrées: il a eu aussi un mot d'invitation à nos compatriotes que tourmente la fièvre de l'émigration." *L'Echo du Cabinet de lecture paroissial de Montréal*, 1869 vol. 11. When it was under the direction of Joseph Royal, *L'Echo* had a more political and social orientation. Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, 156–161, and passim. See also Robert Painchaud, *Un rêve français dans le peuplement de la Prairie* (Saint-Boniface: Editions des Plaines, 1987).

<sup>220</sup> "Royal to Taché, 9 May 1873."

<sup>221</sup> A.-N. Lalonde, "L'intelligentsia du Québec et la migration des Canadiens français vers l'Ouest canadien, 1870–1930," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 33, no. 2 (1979): 163. It is worth pointing out that Alfred LaRocque, the wounded zouave who became a Montreal hero, was one of the members.



to operate as their land manager. On 28 December 1871, a power of attorney from the Montreal office of the notary Hétu was sent to Taché. It gave power “d’acheter en son nom des terres et autres biens fonds sis dans la ...Provence de Manitoba jusqu’au montant de la somme de mille piastres.”<sup>222</sup> In another example, on 16 August 1872, Villeneuve and Lacaille wrote to Taché asking how big was the land they had purchased, and informed him that they had given the money (\$500) to Mr. Austin, the legal intermediary.<sup>223</sup> While the details of these efforts and debates have been well established by scholars, it is less known that Riel too had hoped to shore up the support for Métis rights by encouraging a Quebecois migration into the Northwest. Riel like Taché argued that with the support of Manitoba, Quebec would gain an important ally in their struggle to control the new federal union.

Support among Franco-Americans was more spontaneous. George Stanley is vague about Riel’s intentions in 1874. Seeing no clear purpose, he details the travels of Riel as those of a lost itinerant.<sup>224</sup> For Stanley, Riel was simply biding his time, waiting. I suggest there was more intentionality to Riel’s erratic schedule. While it is difficult to trace Riel’s activities in the second half of 1874, references in the newspapers and the addresses of origin on letters show that Riel went on a tour from St. Paul, Minnesota to Chicago, Illinois to Albany, New York. In these cities, he spoke about his cause and was received with standing ovations and declarations of support. The addresses on the letter he sent to friends and family show that he travelled a circuit, speaking to French-Canadian *émigré* communities in Keeseville, Worcester, and Suncook. He spoke at the meetings of St. Jean Baptiste Associations and published letters in the local

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<sup>222</sup> “Berthelet à Taché, 28 December 1871,” SHSB, Taché Fonds 0075 #9764-9767.

<sup>223</sup> “Villeneuve & Lacaille à Taché, 16 August 1872,” SHSB Taché Fonds 0075 #10801.

<sup>224</sup> “[Riel] did not attempt to take his seat in parliament... He paid visits to Three Rivers and to Quebec... Then his thoughts again turned to the west. In November he went as far as St. Paul...A few days later he was on his way back passing through Chicago en route to the eastern United States. Here he would find his warm friends, [at Suncook and Keeseville]... The best place would be Keeseville. It would be within easy reach of Montreal, and he could travel there without much expense or loss of time...” Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 209.

papers.<sup>225</sup> He wrote home to his mother: “tout le monde est pour nous, partout où je passe si je voulais écouter nos amis, ils me feraient des ovations. Hier, ici, à Worcester, Massachusett, il y a eu une assemblée de canadiens français, ils ont passé les résolutions les plus sympathiques pour les métis, en particulier pour ceux qui sont persécutés...”<sup>226</sup> The Riel collection contains two official letters from Catholic societies in Suncook and Woonsocket (Rhode Island) expressing their support for the Métis cause.<sup>227</sup> Riel himself addressed the assemblies, “Je les ai remerciés en mon nom et au nom de tous les métis. Et les ai[!] invités à venir par chez nous s’établir. Il se pourrait bien qu’il en vienne un certain nombre.”<sup>228</sup> Riel’s support for immigration might seem surprising, but it suggests that he saw French-speaking Catholics as important allies for the Métis in their struggle for autonomy. The cause of immigration to the Northwest was directly related to the amnesty issue, and, with the deadline for Lepine’s sentence approaching, Riel embraced immigration as part of his platform.

Things must have seemed to move quickly in the summer of 1874. Joseph Royal wrote in point form from Saint Boniface to Masson in Montreal in July 1874: the Provincial government under Clarke had finally collapsed; Clarke’s “vengeance” was finished; this would benefit Riel; and the defence of Lepine needed to be coordinated with Desjardins and Chapleau.<sup>229</sup> With the help of his friends, Riel was re-elected for the seat of Provencher in September. In this same month he visited the bishops in Quebec city, Trois Rivières, Beloeil, and Montreal.<sup>230</sup> He sought

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<sup>225</sup> 6 August 1874 *Independent Statesman* (Concord, New Hampshire), p. 1. “Louis Riel... lectured in Suncook, last Wednesday evening, on “The Settlement of the Red River Country.”...”

<sup>226</sup> Doc. #1-204, *CWLR*, 371–72.

<sup>227</sup> See MG 3 D2, #9, PAM.

<sup>228</sup> Doc. #1-204, *CWLR*, 371–72.

<sup>229</sup> “Royal à Masson 9 July 1874,” Masson correspondence series 22.1, BANQ.

<sup>230</sup> These were respectively, Elzéar-Alexandre Taschereau, Louis-François Laflèche, Charles Larocque, and Ignace Bourget. I have been unable to find any records of these visits in the diocese archives, but in January 1875, Riel wrote letters recalling these visits to Bourget, Taschereau, and Larocque. See Riel, *CWLR*, 424–27. See also Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec* vol. 1 *George-Étienne Cartier* (Montreal: fides, 1971), 270.

their support for his immigration programme, the amnesty for Lepine and the rights of Métis. A letter to Bourget indicates that Riel was back in Chicago by the end of November.<sup>231</sup>

The whirlwind tour was an effort to stir up public opinion and to agitate for a resolution. The justice system however was blind to public opinion and on 26 October 1874 Ambroise Lepine was found guilty of murder and sentenced to hang. While the Governor General, Sir Fredric Temple, Lord Dufferin expressed his hope that the amnesty would be granted he offered no promises on behalf of the British Government. The cry of outrage was palpable. Public demonstrations to demand an amnesty, like the one held on 5 November, in Quebec City,<sup>232</sup> were organized across the province, and a petition campaign was launched.

#### 4.9 Petition Campaign

Between 20 November 1874, and 8 February 1875, Lord Dufferin received at least thirteen petitions from residents of Quebec requesting that the government commute Lepine's sentence and grant an amnesty. The signatures and the attached names were forwarded to the Canadian Secretary of State, Richard William Scott. The total number of signatures contained in the archives of the Secretary of State, at the Public Archives of Canada, is at least 4,000, but given the condition of the archive, a precise number is impossible to calculate.<sup>233</sup> The number was certainly much higher. *L'Opinion Publique* stated on 24 December 1874 that a petition from Hull contained 2000 names but this petition was not in the archival folder.<sup>234</sup> Nor are there any

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<sup>231</sup> "Lettre à Ignace Bourget, 25 November 1874," doc. #1-291, in *CWLR*, 406–7.

<sup>232</sup> According to an article published in *Le FrancParleur*, on 5 November 1874, 3,000 people assembled in Quebec to demand an amnesty for Lepine. The editor noted he was pleased that finally the public was taking notice of this important issue. For a week, the paper had been publishing oral transcripts of the trial in every issue.

<sup>233</sup> See Secretary of State General Correspondence (1874) R 174-26-2-E. Many of the documents are torn or shredded. Because the pages have not been completely preserved and some petitions do not have lists of signatures, it was impossible to accurately count the number of signatures.

<sup>234</sup> 24 December 1874, *L'Opinion Publique*, 580.

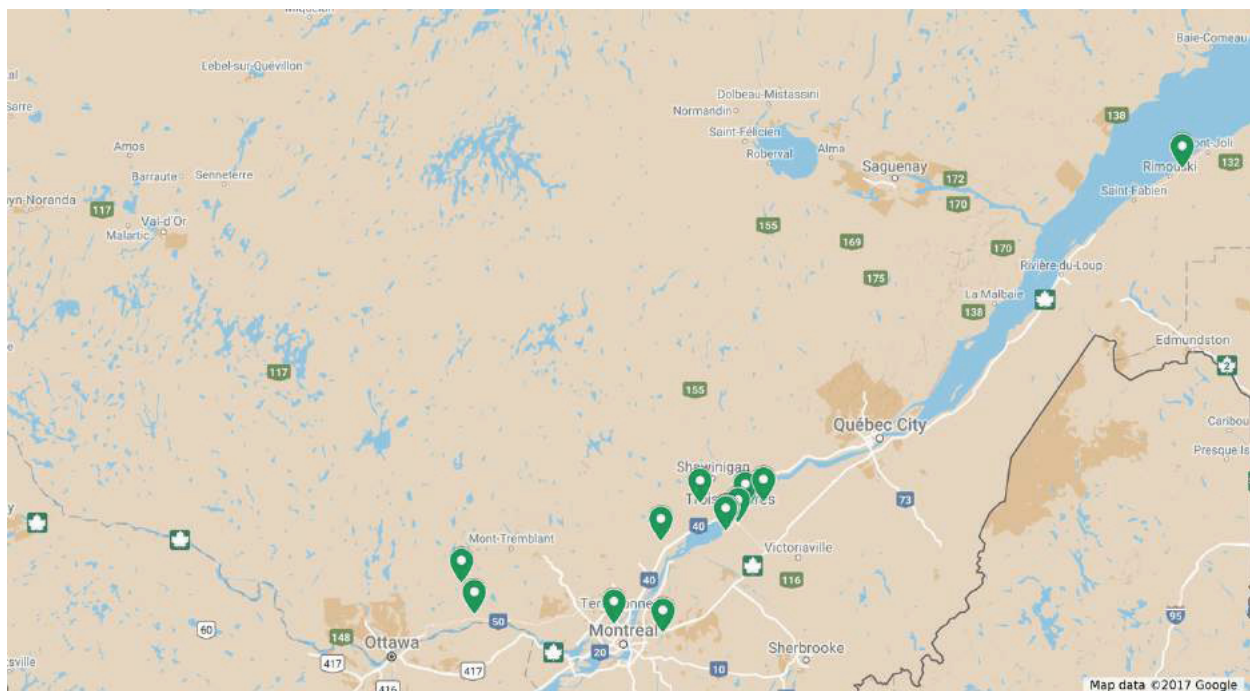
petitions from Montreal.. It is likely that there were other petitions—numerical gaps in the filing, the poor state of the collection, and references to other papers in the forwarding instructions strongly suggest there were others.<sup>235</sup> For instance, despite a penned note on numerous petitions to compare with petition number #1145, the latter was absent from the collection. Still, the coordination of the campaign and the large number of signatures reveal a well-planned strategy and a clarity of focus.

The following map shows the geographic origin of the petitions. There is a surprising lack of petitions from Montreal (the closest petition is from Saint Vincent de Paul near Montreal) and Quebec. Again, this may be due to the condition of the archive.

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<sup>235</sup> The petitions are dated, presumably according to when they were circulated, and were later numbered, and dated by the Secretary of State in order of receipt:

- #1519 Inhabitants of St. Vincent de Paul, 30 Nov 1874;
- #1585 Bécancourt, Co. Nicolet, 21 December 1874;
- #1589 Notre Dame de Bonsécours de la Petit Nation, 23 December 1874;
- #1594 Bécancourt, Co. Nicolet, 23 December 1874;
- #1597 St Gregoire, Co. Nicolet, 21 December 1874;
- #1599 LaRochelle Co. Nicolet, 20 December 1874;
- #1604 St. Pierre Co, Nicolet, 20 December 1874;
- #1608 Gentilly, Nicolet, 27 December 1874;
- #47 Citizens of Beloeil, Vercheres, 8 January 1875;
- #62 Citizens of Nicolet, 7 January 1875;
- #73 St. Barnabe, St Mauricie, 12 January 1875;
- #78 St. Cuthbert [Berthier], undated; (received on 12 January 1875);
- #80 Citizens of Hartwell N. Suffolk, Comté Ottawa, 15 January 1875;
- #116 "Citizens of St. Anaclet [Rimouski], 24 January 1875.



The contents for these petitions were almost identical. Four of the petitions, dated after January 1875 (from Beloeil, Mauricie, Berthier, and Rimouski) were printed on a press, further indicating that this was a centrally organized effort of mass mobilization. The text is almost identical in all the petitions. Citizens were concerned, “que les événements qui se sont déroulés depuis quatre ans dans cette partie de la Puissance du Canada qui forme aujourd’hui la Province de Manitoba, et notamment le dernier, la condamnation de Lépine, ont considérablement agité l’opinion publique dans toutes les parties de la Confédération.” They urged the government to consider that the circumstances under which Lepine had taken action were political, and that it was under a promise of general amnesty that the “peuple Métis du Nord-Ouest” agreed to enter into Canadian Confederation. Therefore,

... le moyen le plus expéditif, pour ne pas dire unique de ramener le calme, de désarmer les passions et de pacifier le pays serait un acte de clémence Royale qui mit le passé dans l’oubli. Qu’en conséquence vos pétitionnaires soussignés croient remplir un de leurs principaux devoirs de citoyens et de sujets loyaux en conjurant Votre Excellence de vouloir bien solliciter de Sa Gracieuse Majesté, leur bien-aimé Reine, un amnistie complète en faveur de toutes les personnes impliquées dans ces trouble et la liberté de Lépine.

Louis Riel either inspired or had a direct influence on this text. The reference to “le peuple Métis du Nord-Ouest” is one that he used, also arguments that reconciliation was necessary for all of Confederation and the amnesty as a condition *sine qua non* for Confederation of Manitoba were laid out in much longer form in his pamphlet *L'amnestie*. But determining authorship is not the right question as it was likely a collaborative project. Just as Riel had refined his arguments over the years in public debates with opponents,<sup>236</sup> and borrowed from allies, even while refining his message through self-critique, so too did the authors of this petition.

The signatures of local curés often appear at the top of the list of names or as witnesses for those who were unable to sign. This suggests it was circulated through the various parishes by the curés, in the same manner as the Zouave subscriptions. Other petitions were supported and likely circulated by town councillors, members of parliament, and senators (such as Alexandre Chauveau MPP for Rimouski and Joseph-Hyacinth Bellerose the senator from Saint Vincent-de-Paul). This coordination was the result of the organizational capacity of the nationalist and ultramontane networks.

At the same time, Bishop Taché was mobilizing public opinion from Manitoba. In December, Taché forwarded a petition from Manitoba which contained 1810 names to the Canadian Secretary of State to pressure the federal government. Taché also sent his own personal petition to the Governor General, Lord Dufferin for clemency. In November, he convinced Archbishop Elzéar Taschereau to organize the bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Quebec to send a petition to the federal government.<sup>237</sup> The archives of the Archdiocese in Montreal contain a copy of the circular letter that Taschereau wrote to all the bishops of the province of

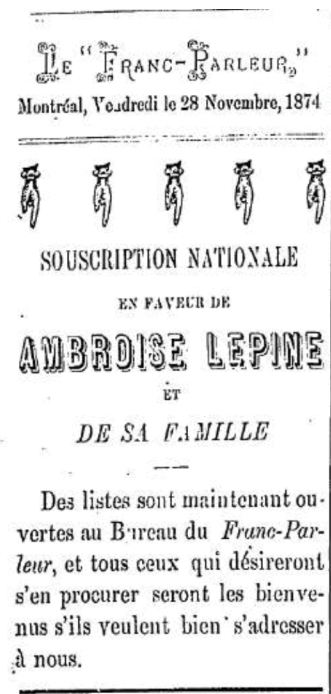
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<sup>236</sup> Most notable was his exchange with Dr. James Spencer Lynch, who had been taken prisoner by Riel in 1869, in the pages of *Le Nouveau Monde* on 12 March 1874. See also *CWLR*, 192.

<sup>237</sup> Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, 134–35.

Quebec, as well as the bishops of Toronto, Ottawa and Halifax. Taschereau's letter, following a proposition made by Bourget, made a formal request that the government honour their "promesse solennelle faite par le Prélat au nom de ce même gouvernement," in other words the amnesty.<sup>238</sup>

In November *Le Franc Parleur*, edited by Alderic Ouimet who was also allied to the interests of the ultramontanes, proposed to cover the Lepine affair in detail, and asked its subscribers if they would approve, even if this meant sacrificing other columns.<sup>239</sup> They must have supported the request for, as a result, every issue for the next two months contained oral transcripts of the trial. In addition, the paper invited the charity of readers to contribute to a fund for Lepine and his family. (See the image to the left.) The Riel affair was generating strong public response, and society was mobilizing. Both conservatives and liberals took up the issue, although the latter were less enthusiastic. (This was reversed in 1885, when Laurier and Mercier championed the betrayal of Riel by the Conservative party, while Chapleau tried desperately to explain himself in the face of public outrage.)<sup>240</sup>



In December 1874, the petitions sent to Dufferin were forwarded by the Secretary of State to the Minister of Justice Télesphore Fournier. Then, on 8 February 1875, the House of Commons requested that all documents and an address be presented to the Governor General with respect to the Amnesty request. Alexander Mackenzie admitted frankly to the Governor

<sup>238</sup> "Taschereau à MM. S.S. les Evêques de la Province de Quebec," Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal, 295.101 Ottawa #874 24A&B. The letter is also accompanied by a note saying that the Bishop of Rimouski signed the request, and sent it to the Bishop of Trois Rivières who passed it to the Bishop of St. Hyacinthe, who passed it to the Bishop of Montreal.

<sup>239</sup> 30 October 1874, *Le Franc Parleur*.

<sup>240</sup> See Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation*, 150-179.



General that he had been trying to avoid “the obvious embarrassments attending the settlement of a controversy...so seriously complicated by the vehement international antagonism which they have excited in this country.”<sup>241</sup> Lord Dufferin, too, admitted that this was the “most thorny business I have ever had to deal with,” and the Colonial Secretary Lord Carnarvon said he would only intervene as a last resort. After four years of pressure for a complete amnesty, Dufferin’s argument that Riel too should stand trial was received with disappointment by the supporters of the Métis. Consequently, considering public opinion in England as well as Canada, Dufferin exercised the royal prerogative and commuted Lepine’s sentence to two years imprisonment.<sup>242</sup> Previous biographers like George Stanley and Thomas Flanagan have argued that Dufferin was attempting to be conciliatory in an extremely sensitive situation.<sup>243</sup> It probably did not seem that way to Riel.

However, the imperial commutation opened the path to resolution for the Canadian government, and Mackenzie introduced a motion to the House on 11 February to grant an amnesty to all participants except Riel, Lepine, and O’Donoghue. Lepine and Riel were exiled for five years, while O’Donoghue was banished for life.

#### **4.10 Agent or Object?**

Earlier biographers of Riel have underemphasized the role of Riel’s agency in this affair. It is only by putting together the various fragments of letters and newspapers that shows the larger pattern at work: an increasingly intertwined and complex web linking Riel to others across the

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<sup>241</sup> For these details and quotes see in Stanley, *Louis Riel*, 212.

<sup>242</sup> Quoted in Huel, *Archbishop A.-A. Taché of St. Boniface*, 136–37.

<sup>243</sup> In considering a posthumous pardon, Flanagan is most clear in his intentions: “It is worth considering the merits of the question now so as not to be carried away in a flood of sentiment in 1985.” Flanagan, “Louis Riel’s Land Claims.”



continent. Riel's contemporaries did not want to admit the influence that a Métis from the margins might have had on some of the most crucial decisions of their era, and consequently structured the archives according to their own categories of knowledge. A telling example can be found in the contemporary press. The following image, designed by Henri Julien, was printed in *L'Opinion Publique* in December 1874.



The text accompanying the “Gravura” identifies each figure,

Le Gouverneur [Lord Dufferin] est sur son trône. [Alexander] MacKenzie, d'un côté, et [Luc] Letellier de l'autre, lui donnent des conseils contradictoires. [Edward] Blake avec sa motion offrant \$5,000 pour la tête de Riel: [Mackenzie] Howell avec sa motion d'expulsion: [Joseph-Alfred] Mousseau avec sa motion d'amnistie: [Louis-Amable] Jetté prêt à faire le coup de main, tous viennent devant Lord Dufferin apprendre la réponse qu'il va faire à la jeune province de Manitoba qui sans doute après avoir fait un discours a brisé son arc dans un mouvement de colère. Ces personnages ont chacun une idée: qui l'emportera.<sup>244</sup>

<sup>244</sup> *L'Opinion Publique*, 24 December 1874, 630. This version of the colour print is found in the Public Archives of Canada C-021971 acc. no. R13133-92.

The object of everyone's attention is "la jeune province de Manitoba" a female figure in a red robe holding a broken bow, which refers to the shooting of Thomas Scott, or the "act of anger" that caused such a controversy for Lepine and Riel. The cartoon, originally printed in black and white, was reproduced that same month in color in the *Canadian Illustrated News*.

Great was my disappointment when I discovered that this man with thick curly hair holding out a paper demanding Amnesty for Lepine was not Riel but Joseph-Alfred Mousseau. Instead Riel, or at least Manitoba, was represented as a female Indian with a bow broken in anger and as a "prize" in the Canadian public forum. This was standard practice, as Carmen Nielson writes, the "indigenized, feminized body was a kind of map that could temporarily stand in for the geo-body of the Prairie West, bounded and simplified like its cartographic counterpart."<sup>245</sup> These caricatures had the capacity to reassure the viewer of the authority contained in the colonial gaze. As Gillian Poulter has argued such visual representations were part of the imbrication of the formation of a national identity.<sup>246</sup> My disappointment seems telling—i.e. could not public opinion depict Riel debating in "civilized" fashion with equals? Despite considerable evidence to the contrary, the artist, the editor and presumably most of the readers of *L'Opinion Publique* could not imagine that Riel could have his own voice in the public sphere of Confederation.

In this public forum, as imagined by French-Canadian editors, Riel does not participate. Instead, assuming that the figure holding the broken bow at least refers to him, Riel is the desired object of the French-Canadian politicians. Any agency on the part of the Métis is reduced to the

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<sup>245</sup> Carmen J. Nielson, "Caricaturing Colonial Space: Indigenized, Feminized Bodies and Anglo-Canadian Identity, 1873-94," *Canadian Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (December 2015): 477-78.

<sup>246</sup> Gillian Poulter, *Becoming Native in a Foreign Land: Sport, Visual Culture and Identity in Montreal, 1840-85* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009).

past as an “uncivilised” act of anger, and all that remains is an object of desire for the “great men” that surround her.

To explain how Riel became an objectified “Indian with a bow,” and was removed from the Canadian public sphere, I would like to return briefly to the meeting of the St Jean Baptiste Society in Montreal mentioned earlier, and its refusal to lend its considerable support to Riel’s cause. Without Riel’s letter it was possible for the more moderate-liberal wing of the Society, controlled by Coursol, to resist the motion put forward by Riel’s supporters in the American and conservative wings to place Riel at the “head of the parade.”<sup>247</sup> One member justified his decision by arguing it wasn’t a question of Riel or the emperor of China, the fact was that he was impossible to locate and they did not even know where to send an invitation. However, Riel was not out of reach, as his letter clearly shows. It seems to me that the blindness to Riel’s presence was to some degree at least an excuse that thinly veiled a form of racism that was increasingly powerful in society. By re-reading Riel’s correspondence and placing it in the proper context, it is possible to overcome some of that blindness which people like Coursol tried to impose upon posterity.

The cartoon of Manitoba as the “prize” for politicians in Central Canada fits into a narrative of western alienation that is alive and healthy, but this representation hides as much as it reveals. Manitoba, the focus of attention, was important but it was not passive. Manitoba was not simply a prize, Louis Riel was there at the “hub” of empire debating, provoking and socializing. The Riel affair illustrates just what Confederation could do for the Métis.

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<sup>247</sup> The following discussion is taken from Rumilly, *Histoire de La Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal*, 104–6. “Un Canadien des États-Unis, J.D. Montmarquet, observe: ‘Si M. Riel était présent à la fête, il serait porté en triomphe, à la tête de la procession.’ J.-X. Perrault: ‘Il n’est pas plus question ici de Riel que de l’empereur de la Chine. D’ailleurs, nous ne savons seulement pas son adresse. Comment pourrions-nous communiquer avec lui et l’associer à nos travaux? Pour ma part, si le nom de M. Riel est ajouté, je me retire du Comité.’ C.J. Coursol: ‘Moi aussi!’” Rumilly reveals his judgment upon the past in a telling manner: “Coursol, l’intrépide Coursol... Coursol pèse aujourd’hui ses responsabilités.”

## Conclusion

Riel, like others of his time, saw the opportunity in the new forms of association that were made possible by Confederation. Confederation was more than a new political vision, it offered a series of networks through which Riel could access social capital. Through his involvement in the Amnesty issue, Riel hijacked the Canadian Confederation project. Though he was far from unique in this respect, his participation in the grand gambit of his era proved a remarkable achievement.

Publishing Riel's *Mémoire* was a key event in the history of Quebec and in Riel's personal life. The goal of this chapter has been to explore the context and implications of this act. Through a careful tracking of Riel's correspondence it shows how the situation escalated until Riel felt it imperative to take matters into his own hands. The *Mémoire* was the culmination of years of work and careful reflection. It presented amnesty as the *sine qua non* of Confederation. Riel's actions galvanised the situation in Quebec and pushed others, who had previously been hesitant to commit their support to the Métis cause. By keeping the amnesty in the spotlight, Riel forced Quebec politicians to make a choice about their support for the rights of French Canadians outside of Quebec. In so doing, he changed public opinion in Quebec and the face of Confederation. The "Riel Issue" forever transformed the French-Canadian idea of Confederation. Arthur Silver was correct to point to Riel and the Northwest as touchstones for Quebec's understanding of its place in Confederation, but he failed to see how Riel strategically made it happen.<sup>248</sup> Moreover, it was not in 1885, but in 1874 that this occurred.

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<sup>248</sup> Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation*.

The ambiguous status of the Métis, who claimed both rights as Indigenous Peoples with hereditary ties to the land and political rights as British subjects, has been a key tension in this chapter. Riel argued, to both Métis and Canadian publics, that the two were not mutually exclusive. Riel believed that he could use the networks he had fostered over the years to sustain this argument.

Riel's alliance building and networking caused a massive response across Canada. It was labour intensive, but the social capital that it produced was formidable. Public opinion itself experienced a moment of crisis, resolved only by an extraordinary intervention by the Governor General. Confederation, as this chapter argues, enabling and extending the reach of politicians like Riel provided new forms of social capital that could be used to advance the interests of specific communities and their interests. Riel's efforts to have the Canadian government declare an amnesty and recognize Métis claims to the land were not therefore so remarkable, but were just like the political efforts of Joseph Howe to get *better terms*.

To end the narrative of Riel's life here is very different: unmarked by the climax of a hanging, some form of resolution was achieved. As it was, Riel's family committed him to the Lunatic Asylum in Longue Pointe, Montreal in early 1876 and then Beauport Asylum outside of Quebec. The history of his incarceration there would be the beginning of another and much darker narrative.



## Conclusion

Riel left Montreal in September 1875. On 6 December, he wrote to Bishop Bourget from Washington, DC. Riel thanked the Bishop for listening to him and recognizing his “mission.” He also acknowledged this was not his own work, but that of “la Vrai Vigne.” However, he had doubts for the future, as he continued “Je veux obéir mieux que je n’ai fait jusqu’ici. A cette fin, je vous prie, Monseigneur, obtenez moi du Fils de l’Homme que j’obéisse désormais surtout par amour de Dieu et du Prochain. Quant à ce qui dépend de moi pour cela, je me sacrifie.”<sup>1</sup> In the same letter Riel asked Bishop Bourget to greet the Pope in Rome for him. Riel asked Bourget to write the following words. “Saint Père, bénissez la nation Métisse. C’est la plus jeune de toutes les nations du monde. Elle est toute petite. Elle aime la Sainte Vierge. Bénissez-la comme nation catholique. Et au milieu de votre famille composée de tous les autres peuples, la nation métisse sera votre joie.”<sup>2</sup>

Riel’s life had always been infused by a strong Catholic spirituality; this would only grow stronger. Two days later at the Church of St. Patrick in Washington, during High Mass, Riel experienced a spiritual revelation where, he later recalled, “God anointed him with his divine gifts and fruits of his spirit, as prophet of the new world.”<sup>3</sup> Six days later, on December 14, he was “transported to the fourth heaven” and instructed about the nations of the earth. Riel increasingly saw himself as a prophet, because he was privy to knowledge of different worlds. The metaphor of transportation, an extension of his travels through Montreal, the United States, and Red River, suggests that his sense of self was predicated on his ability to move between

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<sup>1</sup> “Louis Riel à Ignace Bourget, 06, December 1875,” doc. # 1-251 in *CWLR*, 474-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> “Autobiographical Notes,” doc. #3-148 in *CWLR*, 259-62.

worlds that were converging. As Keith Thor Carlson has argued for the Sto:lo the ability to move between worlds holds great power and responsibility.<sup>4</sup> So too for the Métis, but even as it became the defining feature of Riel's life it was also the most misunderstood. Riel's "metacosmic" abilities to cross cultural space bring to mind the "special tunnels" described by Carlson, "they represent cosmologies thrown together in the cauldron of colonialism—with all the power imbalance inevitably found in such contexts."

When Riel wanted Bourget to speak to the Pope about his "family" he was fusing together Catholic ideas about the Holy Father's relationship to his children, and Métis ideas of *Wakhootowin*. The result was the Métis nation, the smallest of nations, that would take its place among the other nations of the world. Riel's spiritual vision represents a similar encounter and synthesis that would sustain Métis historical consciousness and sense of being. It seems hasty to assume that Riel's millenarian visions were the result of colonialism.<sup>5</sup> Rather, and more to the point, Riel's vision of a people connected by lines of family and shared spiritual awareness was refused by colonialism. In the first half of his life Riel showed what this community might look like and how it might work, but Canada refused and resisted Riel's vision. The refusal to accept the magnificence of this vision, and the negative results that have followed, have produced all the negative aspects of a colonialist inability to recognize a "way of being" outlined so well by Kim Anderson.<sup>6</sup>

Riel's life continued after 1875. To summarize briefly, he was placed in an insane asylum. He was released after a year. After this he went to Montana where he became an

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<sup>4</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 8–9.

<sup>5</sup> Scholars have argued that he refused or was unwilling to accept the harsh realities that his people faced in a new colonial modernity. Thomas Flanagan, *Louis "David" Riel Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); Gilles Martel, *Le Messianisme de Louis Riel* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2000).



American citizen, married and had three children. In 1885, the Métis of St. Laurent, in present day Saskatchewan, asked him for aid in sending petitions to Ottawa, and he became the leader of another political struggle against the Canadian government. After a series of military encounters, which culminated in a Métis defeat at the Battle of Batoche, Riel gave himself up to the Canadian government and, following a spectacular trial, he was found guilty of treason and executed in November 1885. This story, triumphant or tragic, depending on your perspective, has defined him as the antithesis of the Canadian state, and the narratives of his execution have naturalized the nation-state as the dominant configuration of power in the Northwest. The whirlwind that swept up Riel in the years following 1875 was bewildering and would be overwhelming. Frequently, Riel felt that he had little control over events, and his actions during those years need careful reconsideration, however, that is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

In a “genealogical” spirit<sup>7</sup> this biography has tracked Riel’s life across several “worlds” from 1840 to 1875 and through four key themes: family, education, political culture, and networking. An argument about Riel’s agency has been at the heart of this thesis. The primary argument is that Riel participated in the political activities of state-building. Using cultural capital, social networks, and an intellectual toolkit informed by multiple worlds Riel envisioned an institution that would defend and represent the interests of the Métis. The second, related, argument is that Riel acted as a cultural broker bringing Métis understandings of politics to Canadian political situations, and vice versa. While bringing Canadian “civilization” to the Métis, he also sought to bring Métis “civilization” to the Canadians. It was the refusal of the latter that resulted in the dispossession of Métis of their rights.

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<sup>7</sup> I use genealogical in the sense described by Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, La Généalogie, L’Histoire,” in *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, ed. Suzanne Bachelard (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 145–72.

For Riel, the Métis were uniquely capable of dealing with colonization, and he has much to teach us about the incompleteness of settler sovereignty. Over the years, the categories of Indigenous and Settler have become reified, but Riel and the Métis complicate these divisions. Prior to 1875, when the hegemony of the settler state and the power relationships defined by exclusion and difference were not yet established, Riel was able to exploit this complexity for his own purposes.<sup>8</sup> Riel's story usefully muddies the clarity of categories drawn by the settler state to show how the Métis, as British subjects, were involved with state building, *and* at the same time could assert their Indigenous status.

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Family was a key source of Louis Riel's cultural formation. His parents helped shape the concepts of *Wakhootowin* and *otipemisiwak* into a framework for Métis social and political organization. But the era when the Métis could broker hegemony was waning. The scarring involvement of Jean-Louis with the editor of the *Nor'wester* brought home the fact that there were new forms of authority emerging in the community. The Riel-Lagimodière family, through their milling and political activism, was drawn into official relations of power by newer forms of hegemony. As a result, despite the mounting criticism of the HBC state by advocates for Crown colony status or Canadian annexation, the Riel-Lagimodière family, like other Métis families, began to distance itself from the forces of political reform and unrest. The new dynamic, where the Métis were imbricated in the state, implied that they would have to acquire new skills. As illustrated by Riel's involvement in the legal contestation of horse ownership, the family counted on Louis to protect their interests from a young age.

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<sup>8</sup> Susan Neylan's description of the contested sites of Tsimshian missions has been helpful in developing this point. She highlights the overlapping and dialogic nature of encounter, where hegemony was defined by complementing power structures rather than simply clash. Susan Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 6–7.

An education at the *Collège de Montréal* provided Louis Riel with the essential cultural capital to advance the Métis cause. At the college, Riel received a classical humanist education, the heritage of European civilization, but, because it was a crucial marker of class and race, it provided him with a sense of culture that had political and social value. He joined other young men who would form the social elite, both political and religious, of Quebec. Learning the languages, habits, and associations that would be shared among the elite in Canadian society this education was preparatory for an advanced career in politics. My approach to his education is informed by more recent work in the history of education in Quebec. It challenges the older notions of clerical domination and examines student responses to direction. While this cultural capital was a form of domination, I argue that there was a balance between teaching and reception. Further, the professors, aware that they were training the future elite, had to find a balance between expression of the self and institutional discipline because they wanted to create moral agency in their students. Students were expected to learn a sense of balance and, by poising themselves between institutional and self control, would become cultural leaders. This would provide them with the determination and authority necessary in a transforming world.

Riel's award ceremony speech, an important discovery with respect to his oeuvre, provides a useful illustration of how he negotiated Sulpician domination. He interposed himself, as an Indigenous subject, within the debate to give added meaning and significance to the Sulpician education. The dissertation thus contributes to the broader discussion of the education of Indigenous subjects in the pre-Confederation era. It questions the way imperialistic culture and ideas were navigated, accommodated, and resisted by students at these schools. I argue that greater attention needs to be paid to the creative responses of Indigenous subjects to the "colonizing" of their minds.

The dissertation casts the events of the Red River Resistance of 1869-70 in a new light, the transformation of the public sphere. A consequence of colonization, the sources of authority that sustained public order were changing but, because he had lived within both worlds, Riel was able to successfully bridge the differences and form a consensus in the community. Riel blocked the seemingly inevitable forces of western colonization by crafting a political culture that made sense of Canadian ambitions and Métis interests. Riel's engagement in this new public sphere illustrates his ability to master multiple cultural forms and disrupt Canadian claims to hegemony. Also, by examining Riel's interactions in the "public sphere," this dissertation frames the Resistance as a cultural contest, where ideas and communication mattered as much as physical force.

The social and political networks he formed were another important source of Riel's public authority. These networks in Red River were based upon family and Church. In Montreal, they were linked to his education. In the United States, they were based upon political alliances and voluntary associations. After 1870, Riel drew upon these networks and returned to Montreal to present the case of Métis amnesty to Quebec society, and pressure the Canadian government. Riel's long reach into Canadian public life might seem surprising. Yet other imperial subjects dealt with the problem of distance and mobility in a similar fashion:<sup>9</sup> such networks of correspondence and kinship were critical to Riel's self-preservation and empowerment. Moreover, as I have argued, Riel's efforts to present Amnesty as the *sina qua non* of

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<sup>9</sup> Correspondence and kinship maintained networks facing fragmentation across vast distances, Laura Ishiguro, "'How I Wish I Might Be Near': Distance and the Epistolary Family in Late-Nineteenth-Century Condolence Letters," in *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History*, ed. Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry, and Henry Yu (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 212–27; Cecilia Morgan, "Creating Interracial Intimacies: British North America, Canada and the Transatlantic World, 1830-1914," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 19, no. 2 (2008): 76–105; Brenda Macdougall and Carolyn Podruchny, "Scuttling along the Spider's Web: Mobility and Kinship in Métis Ethnogenesis," in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 59–92.

Confederation echoes the efforts of politicians like Joseph Howe who negotiated “better terms” for Nova Scotia. Inserting himself into both networks Riel’s efforts compare favourably to other examples of deal making in nineteenth-century North America.

Choosing to end this story in 1875 challenges the narrative of tragedy outlined by previous biographers as well as nation-state archives and ideology. As Shahid Amin argues, critique of narratives allows us to dwell upon their logic and the manner in which historical thinking reinforces a sense of identity.<sup>10</sup> This is my attempt to juxtapose Riel’s work with the nationalist narratives that “write-against” his impact. With national sovereignty as an objective, a narrative of “colony-to-nation” has privileged the agency of white male settlers in the task of state-making.<sup>11</sup> Riel’s part has been one of resistance. As Michel Hogue illustrates the colony-to-nation narrative fails to account for how the contest over the state-defined borders in the Northwest, and the emergence of a borderlands, offered considerable opportunity for the Métis.<sup>12</sup> The Many Worlds of Louis Riel reinforces Hogue’s argument and extends it to show how his links with the Canadian state further complicate the quest for sovereignty in the Northwest.

The new ending also highlights how narratives establish the historical agents who claim the privileges of citizenship and nationhood.<sup>13</sup> “Dwelling” on the narrative, and reflecting upon its logic, parameters, and intentions, shows how a subject’s ability to resist depends upon the retelling of past events. Jon Wilson argues that a critique of narratives is necessary to escape

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<sup>10</sup> Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauhi Chaura 1972-1992* (New Dehli: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> The term was first proposed by Arthur Lower in his book of that title *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada* (Toronto: Longmans Green and Co., 1946). For an erudit, and anti-nationalist response see Ian McKay, “After Canada: On Amnesia and Apocalypse in the Contemporary Crisis,” *Acadensis* 28, no. 1 (Autumn: 1998): 76-97.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 302–3. Renisa Mawani, “Law and Migration across the Pacific Narrating the Komagatu Maru Outside and Beyond the Nation,” in *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History*, edited by Karen Dubinsky et. al., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015, 253-275.

from the problem of trying to narrate a history “from below” without constructing an essentialized “native” subject.<sup>14</sup> If Riel is only celebrated as a figure of resistance his life obscures rather than explicates the Indigenous experience. It is ironic, but the opposition between non-Indigenous and Indigenous politics theoretically conjures up Métis “agency” only to explain the “twist” in the plot of the disappearance of Indigenous peoples. This overly simplistic opposition between the Settler Colonialism and Indigenous resistance is, as Gayatri Spivak would argue, a projection of the historian’s own interest onto the subject<sup>15</sup> and, while frequently laudable, is too thin.

Faced with the “official” event of the Resistance, we must look more carefully at Riel’s attempts to narrate himself in. Audra Simpson’s “politics of refusal” makes sense of Riel’s rejection of colonial categories of difference.<sup>16</sup> As argued here, Riel refused to be excluded and sought to participate in the process of state-building. Riel attempted to “nest” Métis sovereignty within the framework of the nation-state, through Confederation.<sup>17</sup> Asserting their sovereignty is part of the Métis refusal to “disappear” and is an enduring aspect of recent the political and historical work of a “forgotten people.”<sup>18</sup>

At home with empire because of his facility mediating between frontier and metropole, Riel moved effortlessly between worlds. The folding and overlapping of imperial spaces complemented Riel’s itinerant career. He was a quintessential imperial citizen, or even a trickster who evaded categories by disguising and transforming himself as the circumstances warranted.

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<sup>14</sup> Jon Wilson, “Agency, Narrative and Resistance,” in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 245–69.

<sup>15</sup> Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

<sup>16</sup> Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 25–35.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

<sup>18</sup> David McNab and Ute Lischke, eds., *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007).

By fusing together ideas of Métis family relationships, British ideas about citizenship, American populism, and ultramontane ideas of papal authority, Riel embodied the imperial experience.

If one looks backward, by 1885, the hegemony of the Canadian state was more securely based upon white settlement. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the value of crossing borders and negotiating across cultures was declining and with it went the authority of cultural brokers like Riel. The railway, massive immigration, the arrival of Canadian appointed politicians and legal institutions, and the establishment of the border all gradually led to a form of imperial rule that operated on the basis of “difference” rather than the middle ground that the Métis had been so adept at exploiting and controlling. With the passing of time the possibilities for Riel to influence politics diminished and his power base declined.

In 1869, Riel saw that a state was the best option for the Métis and the confederation of Manitoba was the result of his work. He continued to struggle for Métis rights within the framework of Confederation in the belief that this would serve Métis interests. As he did so he sought to reinforce Métis authority in a situation where the borderlands were declining. It was hard to convince the Métis that state authority would be a source of security, but for a few years it seemed as if he had some success. Reconsidering Riel is, as Nathalie Kermoal suggests, a “necessary exercise”<sup>19</sup> for understanding the emergence of the state and how Indigenous peoples were erased from this history.

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<sup>19</sup> Nathalie Kermoal, “Reconsidering Riel: A Necessary Exercise,” *Inditerra: Revue Internationale Sur l’Autochtonie*, no. 2 (2010): 35–43.





## Appendix

*Transcription of the Manuscript “Plaidoyer sur l’influence des sciences et arts sur la société,”*

I2: 6.3.3-3 6/6, Archives des Prêtres de Saint-Sulpice à Montréal

### **L’influence des Sciences et des Arts sur la Société.**

The following pages are a transcription of the manuscript in the archives of the Sulpician Seminary. In many places the text is unclear. My aim in reproducing this document is to be generous to the original authors, and to give them the benefit of the doubt when at all possible, but also to make the meaning as clear as possible for the modern reader. The identity of the author(s) remains an unresolved issue. Overlapping levels of editing further complicate the question. Rather than fixing all of the non-standardized grammar and spelling I chose to leave them as they are and leave it up to later readers to judge for themselves. For instance the use of “oit” instead of “ait” in many verbs. It should be kept in mind that this manuscript was not prepared for written publication. I have placed the sections which were crossed out, when they were still legible, in the footnotes.

#### *Discours d’ouverture*

Lucius: M.M. Parmi les diverse questions qui ont fait l’objet de notre cours de Philosophie, cette année, se trouve celle de l’influence des sciences et des arts sur la société. Sur cette question comme sur plusieurs autres, il y a divers genre d’opinions: les uns prétendent que les sciences sont utiles, d’autres qu’elles sont nuisibles et même très nuisibles. Nous n’avions pas d’abord l’intention de discuter cette question dont la solution nous proposant si claire dans une circonstance aussi solennelle. Mais un élève de Rhétorique Mr. Octave Jannel ayant étudié la

question en particulier embrassa la cause de l'ignorance et nous provoqua à une discussion publique et aussi solennelle que possible; tant il était assuré de la victoire. L'honneur de la Philosophie étoit[!] engagé n'y avoit pas à reculer, et nous avons choisi cette circonstance ne pensant pas qu'il pût y en avoir pour nous de plus solennelle. Mr. Louis Riel combattra contre ce hardi champion de la classe de Rhétorique et l'on m'a choisi en ma qualité de finissant pour diriger la discussion et porter le jugement que je croirai le plus conforme au sentiment des personnes de bon gout qui comportent cette assemblée.

### L'influence des Sciences et des Arts sur la Société.

#### **Lucius** - Discours d'ouverture

**Maxime:** Je sens M.M. qu'il m'est difficile de blamer les sciences devant une assemblée aussi éclairée que la nôtre et de concilier le mépris pour les sciences et les arts avec le respect et l'estime que je professe pour les savans[!] et les artistes. Mais ce qui me porte à me présenter devant vous avec confiance c'est que je n'entreprends pas tant de combattre la science en elle même que de défendre la cause de la vertu devant les hommes vertueux qui du par une exception rare et glorieuse se prennent contre une influence si funeste et si universelle.

**Probus:** Avant d'entamer la discussion, je vous prierai, Maxime, de vouloir bien lever une contradiction que vous me présentez. Si les sciences sont incompatibles avec la vertu, comme vos dernières paroles le laissent assez voir, pourquoi donc vous êtes vous appliqués, pendant tant d'années, à les acquérir? Et comment se fait-il qu'une érudition étendue et brillante s'allie si bien chez vous avec la vertu? Votre sagesse aurait dû vous déterminer si rester dans l'ignorance ou bien votre science auroit dû corrompre votre vertu.

**Maxime** : Je m’aperçois déjà que j’ai en face un adversaire fin et rusé et que la lutte sera vive. Tant mieux, le triomphe de l’ignorance en brillera d’un plus vif éclat. Quant à la science et à la vertu que vous m’attribuez, c’est un peu compliment,<sup>1</sup> c’est à dire qu’il y a de l’exagération. De plus je vous dirai que notre éducation ne dépend pas uniquement de nous. On ne nous consulte pas pour nous empoisonner. Enfant, j’ai fait comme les autres enfants sans réfléchir sur les conséquences de ma conduite. Aujourd’hui que je puis un peu plus réfléchir, je reconnais mon erreur, je la déplore amèrement; et je suis bien déterminé de quitter ce genre de vie, dans l’intime conviction que les sciences sont le fléau de la société, que les lieux où on les enseigne sont les écoles du vice et que tous les pédagogues de l’univers sont de vrais empoisonneurs et les ennemis du bonheur public.

**Lucius**: C’est donc chez vous, Maxime, une détermination bien arrêtée. Il me tarde d’en connaître les motifs.<sup>2</sup> Seulement je vous prierai de ne pas perdre le ton de modération et de dignité que requièrent la solennité de la circonstance et l’importance du sujet.

**Maxime**: Je n’ai rien dit de trop, comme la suite vous le démontrera clairement. Il n’y a qu’à ouvrir l’histoire, qu’à jeter un coup d’œil sur le monde pour se convaincre de la funeste influence des sciences tant sur les peuples que sur les individus qui ont le malheur de les cultiver. Filles de l’oisiveté et des passions mauvaises elles ne sauroient[!] engendrer que l’oisiveté la mère de tous les vices et [démontrer] les passions source de tout désordre.

**Probus**<sup>3</sup>: Comment les sciences naissent de l’oisiveté et des passions! C’est là une proposition un peu étrange et qui a besoin de bonnes preuves. Je n’y souscris pas immédiatement je vous l’avoue.

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<sup>1</sup> Odd expression, perhaps the equivalent of “un compliment peu flatteur,” or a “left handed-compliment”

<sup>2</sup> Crossed out: “Cette question de l’influence des arts et des sciences sur les mœurs a suscité, je le sais, de grands débats. J’entendrai donc avec avidité les raisons pour et contre.”

<sup>3</sup> Crossed out: “Lucius”

**Maxime:** Je me doutais bien que cette proposition vous étonneroit[!] et vous scandaliserait[!] même, elle seroit peut être mal sonnante pour bien d'autres parce que cette origine est trop universellement ignorée; quoiqu'elle soit la seule véritable. N'est il pas vrai que l'on veut étudier parcequ'on se sent trop paresseux pour faire autre chose? Cette vie inactive passée sur un bon siège au collège, et ensuite sur un fauteuil moelleux à l'abri[?] toujours hors des atteintes de l'inclémence des saisons a de l'attrait pour les amateurs du repos qui très vraisemblablement sont les véritables inventeurs des sciences. Je n'oserais pas affirmer n'avoir pas un peu cédé autrefois à cette idée.<sup>4</sup> Maintenant si je cherche l'origine de quelque science en particulier, je la trouve toujours dans quelque'un de passion.<sup>5</sup> C'est la curiosité qui a fait inventer la Physique, on voulait savoir la pesanteur de l'air qui nous entoure, la vitesse de la lumière et autres inutilités de ce genre. La Géométrie vient de l'avarice: quelque'un craignoit[!] que son voisin n'empiétât sur son domaine et de peur de perdre un pouce de terrain il inventa la Géométrie pour le mesurer et en fixer les limites. Le désir de se donner comme un personnage important a fait inventer la Médecine qui n'est que l'art de retarder la guérison des malades ou de hâter en mort. L'éloquence n'a pas d'autre origine que l'ambition, la haine, la flatterie et le mensonge. À quoi, je vous le demande, serviroit l'histoire s'il n'y avait ni guerriers, ni conspirateurs, ni tyrans? À quoi serviroit la jurisprudence sans les injustices des hommes? L'Astronomie, cette science si vantée n'a-t-elle pas sa source dans la superstition. On étudie les astres pour savoir si on étoit né sous une bonne ou une mauvaise étoile. Pour moi, sans l'avoir étudié, je suis bien certain que mon étoile n'est pas celle qui présage la science mais celle de l'ignorance dans laquelle j'aurais dû demander sans vouloir m'arroger le droit de réformer ou plutôt de gâter l'oeuvre du sage créateur de l'homme.

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<sup>4</sup> The following is crossed out: "J'en fais ma confession publique."

<sup>5</sup> Crossed out: "ou la paresse".

**Probus:** Vos raisons sont spéciuses, Maxime, mais il y manque un peu de philosophie.<sup>6</sup>

S'il est vrai que vous l'attrait du repos vous a porté à vous livrer à l'étude, l'expérience n'a sans doute pas tardé à vous apprendre que vous vous étiez grandement fait illusion à vous même.

C'est un fait bien constaté que l'acquisition des sciences est une oeuvre pénible et laborieuse qui mine les constitutions les plus robustes et engendre des infirmités ignorées de ceux qui se livrent aux dures travaux des champs. La curiosité, l'avarice, l'orgueil et les autres passions, dites vous ont donné naissance aux sciences. Je crois qu'il seroit beaucoup plus raisonnable d'attribuer leur invention à la nécessité, aux besoins des hommes. La Physique n'a-t-elle pas été inventée pour venir au secours de notre faiblesse par l'emploi des forces que cette étude a fait découvrir dans la nature? Que la Géométrie soit née de l'avarice, je crois qu'il vous seroit difficile de le prouver.

Outre la poursuite de cette assertion nous monteront facilement remonter à Thales elle est de votre part un[e?] méprise gratuite.<sup>7</sup> La Médecine doit son origine à nos maladies est dans la défrisation que vous en avez donné vous avez oublié que Hippocrates a dit que les malades guérissent quelque fois sans médecins mais jamais non pas pour cela sans médecine.<sup>8</sup> L'éloquence fut inventée pour démontrer et persuader la vérité, défendre les droits du faible opprimé et faire triompher la justice. Vous me demandez à quoi serviroit l'histoire s'il n'y avoit ni guerriers, ni conspirateurs, ni tyrans? Elle serviroit à nous retracer les vertus des hommes. A quoi serviroit la jurisprudence sans les injustices? Mais peut-on supposer des sociétés d'hommes sans injustices? Je sais qu'on a abusé de l'Astronomie désignée sous le nom d'Astrologie pour lire dans les astres l'histoire de l'avenir, comme on le prétendoit fausement. Mais l'Astronomie assistoit avant cet

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<sup>6</sup> Crossed out: "elles ne m'apparaissent nullement appuyées sur un fondement solide."

<sup>7</sup> Previous line in pencil and replaces the text: On la fait généralement [remonter à Thalés] le premier des sages de la Grèce qui certainement n'inventer point la Géométrie pour fixer les limites de son domaine avec son voisin, puisque par un pur mépris pour les richesses il vécut dans l'indigence. Nos maladies furent inventer la médecine...

<sup>8</sup> The previous sentence is inserted as a margin note.

abus qui prit naissance chez les chaldéens près de 2000 ans avant l'ère chrétienne. Ainsi Maxime, si votre étoile n'est pas celle qui presage les sciences elle n'est pas d'avantage celle qui fait connaître leur[?] origine. Vraiment à vous entendre il faudroit en bonne logique qu'un homme de 30 ou 40 ans marchât à quatre pieds parceque étant enfant il marchait ainsi et qu'il ne doit pas sorti de l'état dans lequel Dieu l'a créé et s'arroger le droit de goûter l'oeuvre du sage créateur de l'homme. Il sembleroit selon vous, que nous devrions tous vivre à la maniere des animaux privés de raison.

**Maxime:** Il ne faut pas, Probus, nous faire tant de peur de la vie purement animale, ni la considérer comme le pire état où nous puissions tomber. Car dites moi, ne vaudroit il pas mieux ressembler à une brebis qu'à un mauvais ange?

**Lucius:** Comment Maxime! vous soutenez que vivre comme les bêtes dans les forêts ne seroit pas le pire état de l'homme! Cette doctrine est d'une telle nature qu'elle ne peut bien se persuader qu'en prêchant d'exemple. Et je suis convainçu que si jamais vous prenez ce parti, ce que je ne pense pas, vous serez loin de ressembler à une tendre brebis.

**Maxime:** Au moins est il incontestable que ce sont ces malheureuses sciences qui ont porté un coup mortel aux moeurs anciennes. Quand on se transporte à la première condition de l'homme, à ces beaux temps de la précieuse et salutaire ignorance, c'est là qu'on trouve la vraie vertu. Quand on considère les moeurs des anciens Scythas et des Spartiates, des premiers Grecs et des premiers Romains et qu'on jette ensuite un coup d'oeil sur nos moeurs et nos société actuelles. Qui n'est pas effrayé des désastres et de la corruption qu'ont produits nos sciences et nos arts, notre politique et nos lois. N'assurez si vous le pouvez , la grandeur de ces maux et parlez moi ensuite de l'heureuse influence des science et les arts sur les peuples.

**Probus:** D'abord, je vous dirai, Maxime, que nous ne pouvons nullement faire usage de ces traditions vaines qui nous sont restées sur quelques peuples de l'antiquité. Ceux dont l'histoire nous a conservé les plus grands détails sont les Grecs et les Romains. Vous prétendez qu'ils jurent d'abord ignorants et vertueux et vous les opposez à nos mœurs actuelles. Mais ouvrez l'histoire des Grecs et vous ne trouverez que meurtres et que violences dans le temps même où la précieuse ignorance étoit dans toute sa pureté: leurs héros étoient des chevaliers errants qui massacraient tout ce qui osait leur résister, sans autre droit que celui du plus fort. Sparte ignorante et vertueuse! Mais c'étoit une vertu qui s'allioit avec bien des vices revêtu[e]s d'une sanction légale comme le vol domestique, le meurtre des enfants disgraciés de la nature et d'autres atrocités de cette espèce. Je n'aurais certainement pas voulu naître chez ces peuples que vous dite[s] si vertueux, ni vous non plus peut être.<sup>9</sup> Les Spartiates étoient plus vaillants que justes. Leurs vertus étoient en très petit nombre. Si nous considérons Rome à sa fondation, elle ne fut d'abord composée que de pâtres<sup>10</sup> et d'aventuriers qui assurément n'étoient pas Philosophes et encore moins des modèles de vertu. De grands crimes, voilà ce qu'il y a de plus mémorable dans ces premiers temps; et l'ignorance en étoit une des principales causes. Il a fallu que la science vint réformer ce que l'ignorance avoit corrompu. Les nations éclairées par sa lumière ont paru tour à tour sur la scène du monde avec plus ou moins d'éclat, de gloire et de vertus, tandis que la barbarie la plus honteuse règne encore après tant de siècles partout où l'ignorance est conservée.

**Maxime:** Comment! On ne voit que barbarie chez les peuples qui font profession d'ignorance! Mais vous oubliez ou vous feignez d'oublier que des nations, en grand nombre, sans connaître les principes de la Morale la pratiquent mieux que dans nos pays policés. Et il en

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<sup>9</sup> This placed in the margin.

<sup>10</sup> berger

doit être ainsi, car si l'ignorance ne donne pas des principes de vertus au moins elles ne fait pas connaître le vice. Au lieu que la Science nous perd en nous faisant le mal dont il est difficile de s'abstenir une fois qu'il est connu vû la perte malheureuse de notre nature déchue. Sans doute que si nous étions des Anges ou si nous avions conservé notre rectitude originelle les science ne nous seroient pas nuisibles, mais dans l'état actuel, elles ne peuvent que nous rendre plus méchants.

**Probus:** Oh Voila un donc qui sent le future philosophe.<sup>11</sup> Donc elles doivent être bannies de la société! Les peuples de nos jours dont vous vantez la stupidité ignorent il est vrai plusieurs de nos crimes, mais n'y voit-on pas d'autres désordres plus affreux que dans nos sociétés? De quelques hyperboles que vous vouliez exalter nos vices, les Cannibales en savent plus que nous sur cet article. Ils ne s'amusent peut être pas à médire de leur prochain, comme on peut le faire dans un salon, mais ils le rotissent et le mangent en chantant et en dansant. Que nous présentent les côtes de la Barbarie depuis qu'on n'y cultive plus les sciences? Elles ne nous offrent plus que le spectacle de citadelles du crime habitées par les brigands de profession. Plus loin sur le même continent nous trouvons des peuples brutaux qui sacrifient leurs prisonniers de sang froid ou les mangent, qui se font des colliers des dents de leurs ennemis et des parquets de leurs crânes. Faut-il pour être digne du nom d'homme vivre comme des lions et des ours?

**Maxime:**<sup>12</sup> Ces peuples cruels le sont au moins franchement, au lieu que chez nos peuples<sup>13</sup> qui cultivent les lettres, tous les désordres se cachent sous le voile trompeur d'une prétendue politesse. Que de soupçons, que de haines, que de trahisons et que de meurtres mêmes se couvrent du masque perfide dehors de l'urbanité? Chez les peuples ignorans, les mœurs son

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<sup>11</sup> This sentence inserted in the margins

<sup>12</sup> The following sentence is crossed out "Des désordres encore plus repoussants, je ne crains pas de le dire, se cachent sous la voile trompeur de cette politesse, née de la culture des lettres."

<sup>13</sup> Crossed out: Civilisés



rustiques, il est vrai, mais elles sont simple, ouvertes, naturelles. On a au moins la facilité de se connaître, on peut se pénétrer réciproquement, et cet avantage épargne bien des vices, au lieu qu'avec notre ton de politesse, nous ne sommes qu'hypocrisie. Nous avons les apparences de toutes les vertus sans en avoir aucune.

**Lucius:** Je dois vous observer que votre transition est brusque et pêche peut être un peu contre les règles d'une bonne logique.<sup>14</sup>

**Maxime:** Que n'importe la Logique pourvue que je dise la vérité!

**Probus:**<sup>15</sup> Fut il vrai que la politesse n'est qu'un raffinement de l'amour propre pour voiler les faiblesses et les crimes, ne serait-ce pas déjà un avantage précieux pour la société que le vicieux n'osait s'y montrer tel qu'il est? D'ailleurs qu'elle est la source de la politesse? Ne vient elle pas de l'étude que l'on a faite des hommes, de leur humeur, de leur caractère, de leurs désirs? L'expérience a appris ce qui déplaît, et d'un infinité de reflexions sur le beau, l'honnête et le décent s'est formé un art précieux, l'art de bien vivre avec les hommes. Celui qui a des vices est obligé de les déguiser. C'est pour lui un avertissement continuel qu'il n'est pas ce qu'il doit être et ses vices ne seront pas aussi contagieux. Dans l'état d'ignorance dites vous l'on peut se pénétrer réciproquement. Mais la rusticité, l'ignorance, empêchent elle le déguisement, les artifices, les tromperies, les trahisons? D'ailleurs si l'art de se voiler s'est perfectionné, celui de pénétrer les voiles a fait les mêmes progrès. On sait évaluer les offres specieuses de politesse et ramener les expressions à leur juste valeur. Il n'est pas croyable que tant un peuple qui habituellement donne ces témoignages extérieurs de douceur, et de bienveillance ne soit composé que de perfides et de dupes. Il y a un grand nombre d'âmes nobles chez lesquelles toutes ces demonstrations pleins de courtoisie et d'honnêteté partent d'un coeur et du vrai désir d'obliger et

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<sup>14</sup> This note by Lucius is inserted in the margins.

<sup>15</sup> Inserted then crossed out: "Il es bien passé pour ce logique, mais pour."

même souvent d'une charité sincère. Et s'il y a une fausse politesse elle n'est le vice ni de la science ni des savans mais uniquement des passions qui sont communes aux ignorans et aux savans. Ainsi je crois que non seulement vous avez péché contre la Logique mais encore contre la vérité. N'est-ce pas Lucius?

**Lucius:** Je crois qu'il seroit difficile de mieux répondre à votre objection, Maxime. J'approuve fort ce que Probus vient de dire. Car j'ai toujours aimé et estimé la politesse et les personnes qui l'exerçoient. Et si elle est un fruit de l'arbre de la science, on est en droit de conclure que cet arbre est bon et excellent.

**Maxime:** Du moins vous ne niez point que les arts entretiennent et apprennent le vice. Les palais, les jardins, les salons sont ornés de statues, de tableaux. Que penseriez vous que représentent ces chefs d'oeuvres de l'art exposés à l'admiration publique? Les défenseurs de la patrie? Ou ces hommes plus grands encore qui l'ont enrichie par leurs vertus. Non, ce sont des images de tous les égarements du coeur et de la raison, tirées soigneusement de l'ancienne Mythologie et présentées de bonne heure à la curiosité des enfans; sans doute afin qu'ils aient sous leurs yeux des modèles du vice avant même de savoir lire.

**Probus:** C'est une pure exagération que d'avancer que les arts soient aussi généralement prostitués que vous le dites. Sans doute, il y a de déplorables abus. Cependant on peut affirmer avec vérité qu'ils concourent surtout à relever la magnificence des temples et dans nos maisons on trouve très souvent le tableau de la vertu et presque jamais celui du vice. Si vous n'avez pas d'autre accusation à intenter contre les sciences et les arts, je ne vois pas qu'ils soient si nuisibles à la société qu'il faille renoncer à les cultiver et je suis tenté de croire que vous êtes en secret de notre avis.

**Maxime:** Non assurément, je n'en suis point; et dans ce moment[?] je sens plus que jamais combien les sciences sont propres à porter la séduction dans l'âme; puisque votre éloquence serois capable de m'ébranler et de m'entraîner vers elles, malgré les raisons solides qui m'en détournent. D'où viennent tant d'impiétés, tant d'erreurs, tant de systèmes absurdes, tant d'inepties, tant de misérables Romans, tant de vers licentieux, tant de livres obscènes? La source n'en est elle pas uniquement dans les sciences? D'où procèdent dans les savants tant d'orgueil tant de malignités, tant de cabales, tant de machinations criminelles contre leurs semblables et contre Dieu? Non, la science toute belle qu'elle puisse être en elle même, n'est point faite pour l'homme qui a l'esprit trop borné pour y faire de grands progrès, dans une vie si courte, et le demi-savoir engendre toutes les abominations et tous les malheurs. Et fut il capable de ces grandes connaissances il a trop de passions dans son coeur pour n'en pas faire un mauvais<sup>16</sup> usage. Bien plus, la vérité est enveloppé de tant d'erreurs qu'après s'être épuisé à sa recherche on ne peut jamais se flatter de l'avoir trouvée. Jugeons en par les écrits de quelques uns de nos philosophes les plus connus. Quelles sont les leçons des amis de la Sagesse? A les entendre, ne les prendroit on pas pour une troupe de charlatans, criant chacun de son côté et débitant la science<sup>17</sup> comme on débite des drogues. Les uns prétendent que notre âme est un composé d'éther chaud et froid et qu'après notre mort si elle n'est pas pure, il lui faut aller animer pendant un temps plus ou moins long, le corps d'un chien ou de toute autre bête. D'autres soutiennent que notre vie n'est qu'une série de rêves. Celui-ci enseigne que tout est esprit, phantomes, celui là que tout est matière, un autre que tout est Dieu. On avancera<sup>18</sup> qu'il n'y ni bien ni mal que tuer son père de propos délibéré n'est pas plus un mal que de le secourir, que les

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<sup>16</sup> Crossed out: "bon"

<sup>17</sup> Crossed out: "dans la place publique! Venez à moi, c'est moi seul qui ne trompe pas."

<sup>18</sup> Crossed out: On va jusqu'à dire.

hommes sont des loups et qu'ils peuvent se dévorer en sûreté de conscience. Grands philosophes! Que n'êtes vous restés dans votre ignorance originelle, vous n'auriez pas fait honte à l'humanité par vos savantes fadaïses! O Ciel! Gardez en au moins notre jeune pays. Je ne puis penser sans une douleur amère à l'ardeur des canadiens pour le progrès des sciences dans ces derniers temps.<sup>19</sup> Le gouffre s'entonne déjà et nous nous y précipitons qu'aveugle,<sup>20</sup> si on ne se hâte d'opposer une digne[?] à ce torrent devastateur bientôt nous serons pour la postérité la plus reculée<sup>21</sup> un terrible exemple de l'action des sciences.<sup>22</sup> Heureux si ces doctrines de l'ancien monde et des anciens temps avoient suivi les savants dans leurs tombeaux. Mais hélas! L'imprimerie enfantée par la science éternise et disperse<sup>23</sup> par le monde entier ces extravagances de l'esprit humain, sous le souffle du génie du mal. Allez écrits célèbres, dont l'ignorance de nos pères auroient rougi, franchissez l'immensité des espaces, traversez la durée des âges et portez en tout temps et en tout lieu la corruption des mœurs et des doctrines aussi futiles que désastreuses, pour attester solennellement d'influence merveilleuse des sciences et des arts.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Crossed out: "Si elles prévalent. Nous debondrons pires que ces tribus d'Iroquois et autres peuples sauvages qui arrivent à peine une espèce de figure humaine avec tous les instincts des bêtes féroces."

<sup>20</sup> Crossed out: "crossed out: encore quelques[?] années"

<sup>21</sup> Crossed out: "l'exemple"

<sup>22</sup> Crossed out: "lumieres sur une people qui a en le malheur de les cultiver."

<sup>23</sup> Crossed out: "multiplie"

<sup>24</sup> The entire page was crossed out here. Other inserts were also crossed out

**Probus:** Oh! voilà une pièce d'éloquence qui fait honneur à un rhétoricien mais je crains bien qu'elle soit désavouée de la saine Philosophie. Vous ne pourriez, Maxime, vous élever avec plus de force et de justice contre l'abus des sciences; mais je suis indigné que vous passiez retomber sur elles ce qui est l'ouvrage des passions.

**Maxime:** Il ne s'agit pas ici d'abus mais bien des maux produits sur ces malheureuses. **Probus:** Mais cependant vous n'aviez montré que l'abus des sciences est pas du tout les maux qu'elles causent.

**Probus:** Vous avez confondu avec les productions d'une saine Philosophie de dangereuses rêveries des systèmes que nous abhorrons. Si quelques écrivains ont abusé de leurs talents pour produire des opinions insipides[?] faut-il dire pour cela que les sciences sont mauvaises? [The following was stuck out: Doit-on rejeter sur l'étude des sciences les opinions incensées de quelques écrivains?] L'esprit humain n'a pas besoin d'être cultivé pour enfanter des opinions monstrueuses. L'ignorance en est plus capable que le savoir. Pour les ouvrages licentieux, ils sont

**Probus:** Voila une pièce d'éloquence qui fait honneur à une Rhétoricien, mais je crains fort qu'elle ne soit désavoué de la saine Philosophie. Vous ne pouriez Lepidus[!], vous élever avec plus de force et de justice contre l'abus des sciences, mais je suis indigné que vous fassiez retomber sur elles seules ce qui est l'ouvrage des passions. D'ailleurs vous vous êtes jeté en dehors de la question; car il s'agit ici non des abus dont ces sciences ont été l'occasion mais de l'action, de l'influence qu'elles exercent sur la société. Parceque quelques écrivains au coeur gâte et au jugement faux ont abusé de leur talents pour produire des opinion insensées, doit-on conclure que les sciences sont mauvaises en elles mêmes? Comme si elles étoient la cause de ces productions absurdes, de ces dangereuses rêveries, de ces systèmes que nous abhorrons? L'esprit humain n'a pas besoin d'être cultivé pour enfanter des opinions monstreuses. -- Pour les ouvrages licencieux, ils sont beaucoup plus le fruit de l'imagination et de la corruption du coeur que celui du savoir et du travail. Oui, je le dis avec amertume on a abusé des sciences, des lettres, et des arts contre leur sublime destination. Mais y a-t-il là un motif suffisant de les proscrire? Où serions nous, s'il nous falloit renoncer à tout ce dont on peut abuser? De quelque côté qu'on se tourne on trouvera des inconvenients partout, à moins de détruire les hommes. Parceque les

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beaucoup plus le fruit de l'imagination et de la corruption du coeur que celui de la science et du travail. Oui, je le confesse avec amertume on a abusé des sciences contre leur noble destination. Mais y a-t-il là une raison suffisante pour les proscrire? Où en serions nous s'il fallait renoncer à tout ce dont on peut abuser? De quelque côté qu'on se tourne on trouvera des inconveniens partant à moins de détruire les hommes. Parceque les athées abusent de l'existence de Dieu pour la nier, les déistes et les rationaliste de la révélation, les matérialistes du dogme de la spiritualité et de l'immortalité de l'âme, se faudra-t-il donc qu'il n'y ait ni âme, ni révélation, ni Dieu? Non, pour des abus il ne faut pas renoncer aux bonnes choses. L'art de l'imprimerie a occasionné de grands maux, c'est vrai, mais aussi il a produit un bien inappréciable. [Struckout: Et l'on peut dire que les bons livres sont encore plus nombreux que les mauvais.] Et s'il y a des bons et des mauvais livres, c'est à nous à choisir les uns et à rejeter les autres. D'ailleurs avant l'imprimerie n'avoit on pas le secret de propager également les bons et les mauvais ouvrages? Ainsi encourageons les sciences et les arts et opposons nous de toutes nos forces à leurs abus. Pour nous convaincre qu'il faut les banir de la société, il faudrait démontrer qu'il en résulte plus de mal désordres que d'avantages réels. Or c'est ce que vous ne démontrerez jamais. Bien loin de m'affliger de ce nouvel élan pour les arts et les sciences dans notre [ce] jeune pays; je m'en réjouis beaucoup. Je suis fier de ce que ce progrès soit encore plus rapide. Elles contribueront grandement à faire rejaillir sur lui un gloire impérissable [struckout: et une splendeur impérissable. Que cette noble ardeur enflamme les hommes et ils se combleront de plus en plus au celui Père des lumières.] Dieu n'est il pas le père des lumières, la toute science par essence et n'est il pas glorieux à l'homme de pouvoir participer à cet attribut divin? Et peut on dire que cette participation n'est pas propre à élever l'homme à l'ennoblir et le perfectionner?

athées nient l'existence de Dieu, parceque les déistes et les rationalistes rejettent la révélation surnaturelles; et parceque les matérialistes la spiritualité et l'immortalité de l'âme, faut il en conclure que ces vérités<sup>25</sup> sont une source de maux et qu'il faut y renoncer? De grâce, mon cher Lepidus, un peu plus de respect pour la Logique, et craignons de tirer des ergos que Molière qualifierait justement de sot. Prouvez-moi Lepidus que les désordres occasionnés par les sciences surpassent les avantages qu'elle procurent et alors je dirai volontiers avec vous; bannissons-les de la société, autrement je ne pourrai que vous dire: cultivons les sciences et les arts et opposons nous de toutes nos forces à leurs abus.

L'art de l'imprimerie a occasionné de grands maux, je l'avoue, mais aussi n'a-t-il pas produit un bien inappréciable? Il y a de mauvais livres mais n'y en a-t-il pas aussi de bons et d'excellents? A nous de choisir ceux-ci et de rejeter les autres.<sup>26</sup> Que les sciences et les arts dûment cultivés dans ce pays et le Canada<sup>27</sup> grandira aux yeux des nations, il brillera d'un éclat et d'une gloire qui lui attireront l'estime universelle; et ce sera un nouvel exemple<sup>28</sup> de ce que peuvent faire des arts et des sciences guidés par la religion<sup>29</sup> avec sagesse pour le progrès et la splendeur d'une peuple.<sup>30</sup>

**Lucius:** C'est assez, Probus, il est temps de terminer cette discussion. Du reste, je suis tenté de croire qu'il tarde à Lepidus de m'en entendre annoncer la fin, dans l'impuissance où il doit se trouver d'ajouter quelque nouvelle raison en faveur de sa cause dont il regrette pour être

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<sup>25</sup> Crossed out: "dogmes" and later "doctrines"

<sup>26</sup> Crossed out: "Bien loin de m'affliger de ce nouvel élan qui se manifeste dans notre jeune pays pour les arts et les sciences, je m'en réjouis beaucoup avec tous ceux qui ont à coeur notre bien et notre prospérité. Oui, que les vraies lumières se répandent, que l'instruction de la jeunesse canadienne soit forte, profonde et étendue, que les cours d'études soient complète, et conduit avec sagesse et habileté déjà comme ils le sont dans les maisons chargées de la haute éducation, alors toutes les professions libérales seront à la hauteur qui leur convient et une morale de gloire immortelle brillera notre..."

<sup>27</sup> Inserted section illegible: in pencil?

<sup>28</sup> Crossed out: "de l'ancien bienfaissant[?]"

<sup>29</sup> Crossed out: "faire les science et les arts bien enclouer..."

<sup>30</sup> Crossed out: "d'une peuple qui les cultive avec sagesse une application sage et souscrite."

d'avoir entre pris la défense devant une assemblée aussi distinguée. Cependant je dois avouer que la cause de l'ignorance n'a pas de défenseur aussi habile que vous, Lepidus.<sup>31</sup>

Si votre éloquence eut été soutenue par une bonne philosophie cette cause aurait peut être triomphé aux yeux de plusieurs comme un habile avocat fait triompher une mauvaise cause. Je vous conseille donc, mon cher Lepidus de joindre à l'étude des Belles-Lettres et de la Rhétorique celle de la Philosophie et de n'entreprendre ensuite que la défense de la vérité contre l'erreur et alors le triomphe vous sera glorieux.

Pour vous, Probus, vous avez su par un heureux mélange d'éloquence et de philosophie faire briller la vérité à tous les gens en répondant avec force et exactitude aux objections qui vous étaient proposées avec tant de verve et je suis heureux de proclamer votre victoire et celle de la cause des sciences et des arts en nos tant ce jugement que je ne fais que ...[?] rendre l'écho de celui que porte cette honorable assemblée.

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<sup>31</sup> This is the end of the manuscript. The concluding remarks are found on the first page.





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Collège de Montréal - Seminary Fonds P1.11.3

#### Bibliothèque et Archives Nationale de Québec - Vieux Montreal

Fonds Masson P650 Louis Rodrique Masson Series 22.1

Fonds Desjardins CLG 19

#### Library and Archives Canada

Collection Louis Riel MG 27

Fonds Alexandre Taché MG29

Fonds du ministère de la Milice et Défence MG9

Fonds Alphonse Desjardins MG27

Masson Collection MG 19-C1

Records relating to Riel and the NorthWest Uprising (1873-1886)

Secretary of State General Correspondence (1874-5) RG6

William MacDougal Papers C-2055

#### McCord Museum

Notman Photographic Archive

Beaver Club P305

George-Étienne Cartier Papers P197

Honoré Beaugrand Fonds P675

Louis Riel Collection C209

McGillivray Family P100

Northwest Company P104

Peter Warren Dease (Red River) P 241

William McKay 178

William Ermatinger (Sault St. Marie) P332

#### Minnesota Historical Society

Alexander Ramsay and Family Personal Papers and Governor's Records M203-204  
Bishop Ireland Papers M454  
James Wickes Taylor Papers M156  
Records of Governor Henry H. Sibley 154.J.14.1B  
Records of Territorial Governor Alexander Ramsay 992-32

#### North Dakota Historical Society

Albert Dease Papers  
George B. Winship Papers  
Dakota Territory Records  
Norman Kittson Papers  
Historical Data Project Rolette Country, French Indians

#### Provincial Archives of Manitoba

Belleau collection  
Council of Assiniboia Papers MG2  
    B1 Minutes of Council  
    B2 Papers and Financial Records  
    B3 Census Records  
    B4 Court Records  
    B5 Red River Settlement Papers  
    B6 Executive Relief Committee  
    B7 Military  
Lac La Pluie Post-Journal 1837-38 1M1660 & 1M68  
Private Records from the Red River Settlement E.8.3-6  
Riel Papers MG 3  
Taché Correspondence MG 7

#### Société Historique de St. Boniface

Taché Correspondence  
Louis Schmidt's Recollections  
Masson Fonds  
Provencher Papers  
Riel Papers

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*Courrier de S. Hyacinthe* 1870 1873-4  
*Journal de l'Instruction Publique* (Montreal) 1860-1864  
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