

## **The Riel Rebellions**

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**Introduction:** Louis Riel is one of the most controversial figures in Canadian history – to some he is a hero and a martyr; to others, a traitor. This paper will not attempt to come out on either side of the debate, but rather outline the events that brought this charismatic figure to the forefront in two rebellions against the established authority in Canada.

**Early Life:** Louis Riel was born in 1844, in the Red River Settlement. He was the oldest of 11 children of French-Canadian/Métis parents – Louis Riel Sr., and Julie Lagimodiere. He was educated by Roman Catholic priests in St. Boniface until he was 13, at which time he was sent to a Sulpician Seminary in Montreal with the intention that he become a priest.

However, with the news of his father's death in 1864, he quit the seminary. He continued his education for a while at a Grey Nuns Convent, but was expelled for breaches of discipline. He then worked for a short time in a law office in Montreal, but a failed romance and disillusionment with legal work led him to leave Montreal in 1866 and move to Chicago. There he wrote poetry and later worked as a clerk in St Paul, Minnesota before returning to the Red River Settlement on 26 July 1868 at the age of 24.

**The Red River Rebellion, 1870:** The majority population of the Red River Settlement had historically been Métis and First Nation people. Upon his return, Riel found that religious, nationalistic, and racial tensions were exacerbated by an influx of Anglophone Protestant settlers from Ontario. The political situation was also uncertain, as ongoing negotiations for the transfer of Rupert's Land, which included the Red River Settlement, from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) to Canada had not addressed the political terms of transfer.

Finally, despite warnings to the Macdonald government that any such activity would precipitate unrest, the Canadian Minister of Public Works, William McDougall, ordered a survey of the area. The arrival on 20 August 1869 of a survey party headed by Colonel John Stoughton Dennis increased anxiety among the Métis since they did not possess title to their land.

Riel denounced the survey and on 11 October 1869, the survey's work was disrupted by a group of Métis that included Riel. *"Further progress with the survey has been stopped by a band of some 18 French half breeds, headed by a man called Louis Riel."*<sup>1</sup> This act constituted the first step in what became known as the Red River Rebellion. This Métis group organized itself as the "Métis National Committee" on 16 October, with Riel as secretary and John Bruce (1837-1893) as president. When summoned by the HBC-controlled Council of Assiniboia to explain his actions, Riel declared that any attempt by Canada to assume authority would be contested unless Ottawa had first negotiated terms with the Métis.

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<sup>1</sup> Gillmor, D. & Turgeon, P, *Canada: A People's History, Vol1*, McClelland & Stewart Ltd, 2000, p284

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Nevertheless, the unilingual McDougall was appointed lieutenant governor-designate, and attempted to enter the settlement on 2 November. McDougall's party was turned back near the American border, and on the same day, 120 Métis led by Riel seized Fort Garry.

On 6 November, Riel invited Anglophones to attend a convention alongside Métis representatives to discuss a course of action. On 1 December he proposed to this convention a List of Rights, containing 14 points, as a condition of union. Much of the Settlement came to accept the Métis point of view, but a passionately pro-Canadian minority began organizing in opposition. Loosely constituted as the Canadian Party, this group was led by John Christian Schultz<sup>2</sup>, Charles Mair<sup>3</sup>, Colonel John Stoughton Dennis<sup>4</sup>, and Major Charles Boulton<sup>5</sup>.

McDougall attempted to assert his authority by authorizing Dennis to raise a contingent of armed men, but the Anglophone settlers largely ignored this call to arms. Schultz, however, attracted approximately 50 recruits and fortified his house and store. Riel ordered Schultz's home surrounded, and on 7 December 1869 the outnumbered Canadians soon surrendered and were imprisoned in Upper Fort Garry.



**Riel and the Provisional Government, 1869<sup>6</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup>(1840-1896) At the time of the Red River Rebellion was a shady businessman, newspaper editor and leader of the ultra-Protestant Canadian Party. Later became a Canadian politician and the 5<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba.

<sup>3</sup> (1838-1927) Prominent poet and founder of the nationalist Canada First movement.

<sup>4</sup> (1820 –1885) was a Canadian surveyor, militia officer, and civil servant. In 1866, Dennis led an ill-fated militia attack against the Fenians at Fort Erie.

<sup>5</sup> (1841-1899) was a surveyor and soldier. Led militia unit called Boulton`s Scouts during the North West Rebellion Later became a municipal politician

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0006837>

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Hearing of the unrest, Ottawa sent three emissaries to the Red River, including HBC representative Donald Alexander Smith. While they were en route, the Métis National Committee declared a provisional government on 8 December, with Riel becoming its president on 27 December. Meetings between Riel and the Ottawa delegation took place on 5 and 6 January 1870, but when these proved fruitless, Smith chose to present his case in a public forum.

Smith assured large audiences of the Government's goodwill in meetings on 19 and 20 January, leading Riel to propose the formation of a new convention split evenly between French and English settlers to consider Smith's instructions. On 7 February, a new list of rights was presented to the Ottawa delegation, and Smith and Riel agreed to send representatives to Ottawa to engage in direct negotiations on that basis. The provisional government established by Louis Riel published its own newspaper titled *New Nation* and established the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia to pass laws.

Despite this apparent progress on the political front, the Canadian Party continued to plot against the provisional government. However, they suffered a setback on 17 February, when 48 men, including Boulton and Thomas Scott, were arrested near Fort Garry.

Boulton was tried by a tribunal headed by Ambroise-Dydime Lépine and sentenced to death for his interference with the provisional government. He was pardoned, but Scott interpreted this as weakness by the Métis, whom he regarded with open contempt. After Scott repeatedly quarrelled with his guards, they insisted that he be tried for insubordination. At Scott's trial, he was found guilty of defying the authority of the provisional government and was sentenced to death. Riel was repeatedly entreated to commute the sentence, but Riel responded to the pleas by saying:

*"I have done three good things since I have commenced: I have spared Boulton's life at your instance, I pardoned Gaddy, and now I shall shoot Scott."*<sup>7</sup>

Scott was executed by firing squad on 4 March. Riel's motivations for allowing the execution have been the cause of much speculation, but his own justification was that he felt it necessary to demonstrate to the Canadians that the Métis must be taken seriously.

The delegates representing the provisional government departed for Ottawa in March. Although they initially met with legal difficulties arising from the execution of Scott, they were soon able to enter into direct talks with Macdonald and Georges-Étienne Cartier. An agreement enshrining the demands in the List of Rights was quickly reached, and this formed the basis for the Manitoba Act of 12 May 1870, which formally admitted Manitoba as the fifth Province in the Canadian confederation. However, the negotiators were unable to secure a general amnesty for the members of the provisional government, including Riel.

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<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia *Louis Riel*

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As a means of exercising Canadian authority in the settlement and dissuading American expansionists, a Canadian military expedition of 1200 men under Colonel Garnet Wolseley was dispatched to the Red River. Wolseley's force comprised two militia battalions commanded by LCol S.P. Jarvis and LCol L. Casault.

When he closed Parliament on 12 May 1870, the Governor General made it clear that the Red River Expedition was not intended as a punitive mission – *"His Majesty's troops go forth on an errand of peace, and will serve as an assurance to the inhabitants of the Red River Settlement and the numerous Indian tribes that occupy the North West that they have a place in the regard and counsels of England, and may rely upon the impartial protection of the British sceptre."*<sup>8</sup>

It took Wolseley's force 13 weeks to make the long trek but despite the length of the trip and extremely hard conditions, morale among the troops remained high – a tribute to Wolseley's preparation and leadership. He entered Fort Garry on 24 August 1870.

Despite the assurances of peace, Riel had learned that elements of the Canadian militia in the expedition meant to lynch him. He, and several companions fled to the United States as the expedition approached the Red River. The arrival of the expedition at Fort Garry marked the effective end of the Red River Rebellion.

The total cost of the Red River Expedition was \$500,000. According to Wolseley it was, *"the cheapest operation ever carried out....I attribute this economic result chiefly to the fact that it was planned and organized far away from all War Office influence and meddling."*<sup>9</sup>

**Intervening Years:** On 2 September 1870 a new lieutenant governor Adams George Archibald arrived and set about the establishment of civil government for the new Province of Manitoba. The results of the first provincial election in December 1870 were promising for Riel, still in exile, as many of his supporters came to power. Nevertheless, stress and financial troubles precipitated a serious illness—perhaps a harbinger of his future mental afflictions—that prevented his return to Manitoba until May 1871.

Meanwhile, the Province faced another threat, this time from cross-border Fenian raids coordinated by one of Riel's former associates, William Bernard O'Donoghue. While the threat proved less than feared, Archibald proclaimed a general call to arms on 4 October. Companies of armed horsemen were raised, including one led by Riel. When Archibald reviewed the troops in St. Boniface, he made the significant gesture of publicly shaking Riel's hand, signalling that a rapprochement had been affected.

This was not to last however. When this news reached Ontario, the Canada First movement whipped up a significant resurgence of anti-Riel (and anti-Archibald) sentiment. With Federal elections coming in 1872, the Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald could ill afford a

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<sup>8</sup> Stanley, George, F.G., *Canada's Soldiers*, The MacMillan Co. of Canada, 1960, p. 237

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.239

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rift in Quebec-Ontario relations. He therefore quietly offered Riel what amounted to a bribe of \$1,000 to enter voluntary exile.

Riel accepted, and arrived in St. Paul, Minnesota on 2 March 1872. However, by late June of the same year he was back in Manitoba and was soon persuaded to run as a member of parliament for the electoral district of Provencher.

However, following the early September defeat of Georges – Etienne Cartier in his home riding in Quebec, Riel stood aside so that Cartier—on record as being in favour of amnesty for Riel—might secure a seat. Cartier won by acclamation, but Riel's hopes for a swift resolution to the amnesty question were dashed following Cartier's death on 20 May 1873.

In the ensuing by-election in October 1873, Riel ran unopposed as an Independent, although he had again fled, a warrant having been issued for his arrest in September. Riel made his way to Montreal and, fearing arrest or assassination, vacillated as to whether he should attempt to take up his seat in the House of Commons since Edward Blake, the Premier of Ontario, had announced a bounty of \$5,000 for his arrest.

Famously, Riel was the only Member of Parliament who was not present for the great Pacific Scandal debate of 1873 that led to the resignation of the Macdonald government in November. Liberal leader Alexander Mackenzie became the interim prime minister, and a general election was held in January 1874. Although the Liberals under Mackenzie formed the new government, Riel easily retained his seat. Formally, Riel had to sign a register book at least once upon being elected, and he did so under disguise in late January. He was nevertheless stricken from the roll.



Undeterred, Riel prevailed again in the resulting by-election, and although again expelled, his symbolic point had been made and public opinion in Quebec was strongly tipped in his favour.

During most of this period, Riel had been staying with priests of the Oblate order in Plattsburgh, New York. It was here that he received news of Lépine's fate. Following his trial for the murder of Scott, which had begun on 13 October 1874, Lépine was found guilty and sentenced to death. This sparked outrage in the sympathetic Quebec press, and calls for amnesty for both Lépine and Riel were renewed. This presented a severe political difficulty for Mackenzie, who was hopelessly caught between the demands of Quebec and Ontario.

However, a solution was forthcoming when, acting on his own initiative, the Governor General Lord Dufferin commuted Lépine's sentence in January 1875. This opened the door for Mackenzie to secure from parliament an amnesty for Riel, on the condition that he remain in exile for five years.

<sup>10</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis\\_Riel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Riel)

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During his time of exile, Riel was primarily concerned with religious rather than political matters. Spurred on by a sympathetic Roman Catholic priest in Quebec, he was increasingly influenced by his belief that he was a divinely chosen leader of the Métis. His mental state deteriorated, and following a violent outburst he was taken to Montreal, where he was under the care of his uncle, John Lee, for a few months. But after Riel disrupted a religious service, Lee arranged to have him committed in an asylum in Longue-Pointe on 6 March 1876 under the assumed name "Louis R. David".

Fearing discovery, his doctors soon transferred him to the Beauport Asylum near Quebec City under the name "Louis Larochelle". While he suffered from sporadic irrational outbursts, he continued his religious writing, and composing theological tracts with a mixture of Christian and Judaic ideas. He consequently began calling himself Louis "David" Riel, prophet of the new world, and he would pray (standing) for hours, having servants help him to hold his arms in the shape of a cross. Nevertheless, he slowly recovered, and was released from the asylum on 23 January 1878 with an admonition to lead a quiet life.

In the fall of 1878, Riel returned to St. Paul and briefly visited his friends and family. This was a time of rapid change for the Métis of the Red River. The buffalo on which they depended were becoming increasingly scarce, the influx of settlers was ever increasing, and much land was sold to unscrupulous land speculators. Like other Red River Métis who had left Manitoba, Riel headed further west to start a new life. Travelling to the Montana Territory, he became a trader and interpreter in the area surrounding Fort Benton. Observing rampant alcoholism and its detrimental impact on the Native American and Métis people, he engaged in an unsuccessful attempt to curtail the whisky trade.

In 1881, he married Marguerite Monet (1861–1886), a young Métis. They were to have three children: Jean-Louis (1882–1908); Marie-Angélique (1883–1897); and a boy who was born and died on 21 October 1885, less than one month before Riel was hanged.

Riel soon became involved in the politics of Montana, and in 1882, actively campaigned on behalf of the Republican Party. He brought a suit against a Democrat for rigging a vote, but was then himself accused of fraudulently inducing British subjects to take part in the election. In response, Riel applied for United States citizenship and was naturalized on 16 March 1883. With two young children, he had by 1884 settled down and was teaching school at the St. Peter's Jesuit mission in the Sun River district of Montana.

**The North-West Rebellion, 1885:** Following the Red River Rebellion, Métis travelled west and settled in the Saskatchewan Valley, especially along the south branch of the river in the country surrounding the Saint-Laurent mission (near modern St. Laurent de Grandin, Saskatchewan). But by the 1880s, it had become clear that westward migration was no panacea for the troubles of the Métis and the plains Indians. The rapid collapse of the buffalo herd was causing near starvation among the Plains Cree and Blackfoot First Nations. This was exacerbated by a reduction in government assistance in 1883, and by a general failure of Ottawa to live up to its treaty obligations. The Métis were likewise obliged to give up the hunt and take up agriculture—but this transition was accompanied by complex issues surrounding land claims similar to those that had previously arisen in Manitoba. Moreover,

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settlers from Europe and the eastern provinces were also moving into the Saskatchewan territories, and they too had complaints related to the administration of the territories.

Virtually all parties had grievances, and by 1884 English settlers, Anglo-Métis and Métis communities were holding meetings and petitioning a largely unresponsive government for redress. In the electoral district of Lorne, a meeting of the south branch Métis was held in the village of Batoche on 24 March, and thirty representatives voted to ask Riel to return and represent their cause. On 6 May a joint "Settler's Union" meeting was attended by both the Métis and English-speaking representatives from Prince Albert, including William Henry Jackson, an Ontario settler sympathetic to the Métis and known to them as Honoré Jackson, and James Isbister of the Anglo-Métis. Here it was resolved to send a delegation to ask Riel's assistance in presenting their grievances to the Canadian government.



**Gabriel Dumont<sup>11</sup>**

The head of the delegation to Riel was Gabriel Dumont, a respected buffalo hunter and leader of the Saint-Laurent Métis who had known Riel in Manitoba. Riel was easily swayed to support their cause—which was perhaps not surprising in view of Riel's continuing conviction that he was the divinely selected leader of the Métis and the prophet of a new form of Christianity. Riel also intended to use the new position of influence to pursue his own land claims in Manitoba.

The party departed 4 June, and arrived back at Batoche on 5 July. Upon his arrival Métis and English settlers alike formed an initially favourable impression of Riel following a series of speeches in which he advocated moderation and a reasoned approach. During June 1884, the Plains Cree leaders Big Bear and Poundmaker were independently formulating their complaints, and subsequently held meetings with Riel. However, the Indians' grievances were quite different from those of the settlers, and nothing was resolved.

Inspired by Riel, Honoré Jackson and representatives of other communities set about drafting a petition. On 28 July, Jackson released a manifesto detailing grievances and the settler's objectives. A joint English-Métis central committee with Jackson acting as secretary worked to reconcile proposals from different communities. In the interim, Riel's support began to waver. As Riel's religious pronouncements became increasingly removed from Roman Catholicism, the clergy began to distance themselves. Also, in response to bribes by territorial lieutenant governor and Indian commissioner Edgar Dewdney, local English-language newspapers adopted an editorial stance critical of Riel.

Nevertheless, the work continued, and on 16 December Riel forwarded the committee's petition to the government, along with the suggestion that delegates be sent to Ottawa to engage in direct negotiation. Receipt of the petition was acknowledged by Joseph-Adolphe

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.danielnpaul.com/LouisRiel.html>

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Chapleau, Macdonald's Secretary of State, although Macdonald himself would later deny having ever seen it.

While Riel awaited news from Ottawa he considered returning to Montana, but by February 1885 had resolved to stay. Without a productive course of action, Riel began to engage in obsessive prayer, and was experiencing a significant relapse of his mental agitations. This led to deterioration in his relationship with the Catholic hierarchy, as he publicly espoused an increasingly heretical doctrine.

On 11 February 1885, a response to the petition was received. The government proposed to take a census of the North-West Territories, and to form a commission to investigate grievances. This angered the Métis, who interpreted this as a mere delaying tactic. A faction emerged that favoured taking up arms at once. This was not supported by the Church, the majority of the English-speaking community, or, indeed, by the Métis faction supporting local leader Charles Nolin. But Riel, undoubtedly influenced by his messianic delusions, became increasingly supportive of this course of action. Disenchanted with the status quo, and swayed by Riel's charisma and eloquent rhetoric, most Métis remained loyal to Riel.

On 18 March it became known that the North-West Mounted Police garrison at Battleford was being reinforced. Although only 100 men had been sent in response to warnings from NWMP superintendent L.N.F. Crozier, a rumour soon began to circulate that 500 heavily armed troops were advancing on the territory. Métis patience was exhausted, and Riel's followers seized arms, took hostages, and cut the telegraph lines between Batoche and Battleford.



The Provisional Government of Saskatchewan was declared at Batoche on 19 March, with Riel as the political and spiritual leader and with Dumont assuming responsibility for military affairs. Riel formed a council called the Exovedate (a neologism meaning "those who have left the flock"), and sent representatives to court Poundmaker and Big Bear. On 21 March, Riel's emissaries demanded that Crozier surrender Fort Carlton, but this was refused.

The situation was becoming critical, and on 23 March a telegraph sent to Macdonald indicated that military intervention might be necessary.

**Poundmaker**<sup>12</sup> Scouting near Duck Lake on 26 March, a force of about 200 Métis and Indians led by Gabriel Dumont unexpectedly chanced upon a combined group of 90 Prince Albert Volunteers and North-West Mounted Police led by their superintendent Leif Newry Fitzroy Crozier from Fort Carlton. In the ensuing Battle of Duck Lake, the police were routed, and the Indians also rose up once the news became known. The die was cast for a violent outcome, and the North-West Rebellion was begun in earnest.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.danielnpaul.com/LouisRiel.html>

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On March 30, 1885, a raiding party of Cree people, short of food due to declining bison populations, approached Battleford. The white inhabitants fled to the nearby Northwest Mounted Police post, Fort Battleford. The Crees then took food and supplies from the abandoned stores and houses. In an argument, an Indian Agent named Rae was shot and killed.



**Big Bear**<sup>13</sup>

On April 2, 1885, near Frog Lake, Saskatchewan (now in Alberta) a Cree raiding party led by Wandering Spirit attacked a small town. Angered by what seemed to be unfair treaties and the withholding of vital provisions by the Canadian government, and also by the dwindling buffalo population, their main source of food, Big Bear and his Cree decided to rebel after the successful Métis victory at Duck Lake. They gathered all the white settlers in the area into the local church. They killed Thomas Quinn, the town's Indian Agent, after a disagreement broke out. The Cree then attacked the settlers, killing nine and taking three captive.

The massacre prompted the Canadian government to take notice of the growing unrest in the North-West Territories. When the rebellion was put down, the government hanged Wandering Spirit, the war chief responsible for the Frog Lake Massacre.

On April 15, 1885, 200 Cree warriors descended on Fort Pitt. They intercepted a police scouting party, killing a constable, wounding another, and captured a third. Surrounded and outnumbered, garrison commander Francis Dickens (son of famed novelist Charles Dickens) capitulated and agreed to negotiate with the attackers. Big Bear released the remaining police officers but kept the townspeople as hostages and destroyed the fort. Six days later, Inspector Dickens and his men reached safety at Battleford.

Riel had counted on the Canadian government being unable to effectively respond to another uprising in the distant North-West Territories, thereby forcing them to accept political negotiation.

This was essentially the same strategy that had worked to good effect during the 1870 rebellion. In that instance, the first troops did not arrive until three months after Riel seized control. However, Riel completely overlooked the significance of the nascent Canadian Pacific Railway. Despite major gaps in railway construction, the first Canadian regular and militia units, under the command of Major-General Frederick Dobson Middleton, arrived in Duck Lake less than two weeks after Riel had made his demands.



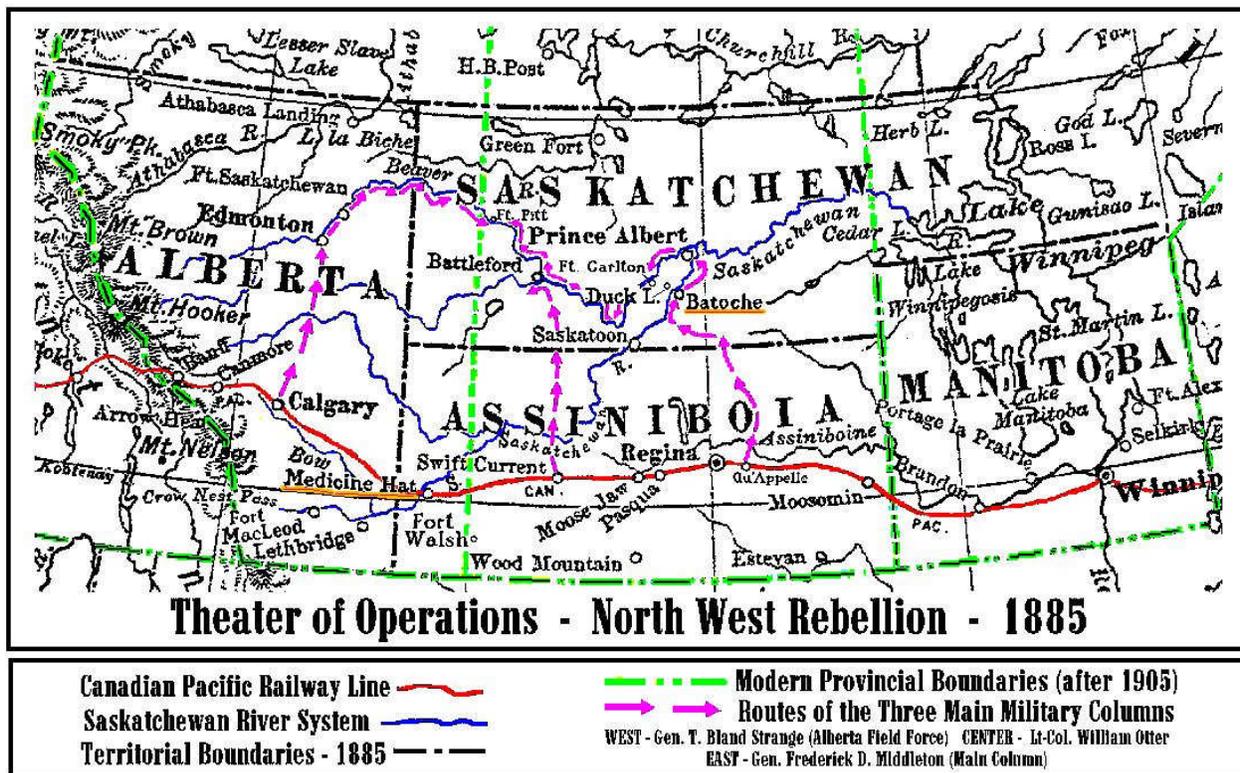
**MGen Middleton**<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <http://library2.usask.ca/northwest/background/bear.htm>

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

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Middleton's strategy was to deploy three columns to relieve the threatened areas.<sup>15</sup> He personally led one column from Fort Qu'Appelle in the direction of Batoche and Swift Current. Lieutenant Colonel William Otter led a second force from Swift Current, northward to relieve the besieged Battleford. Further west, General T.B. Strange led a column north from Calgary to Edmonton then down the Saskatchewan River toward Big Bear's encampment near Fort Pitt.



Source: <http://members.memlane.com/gromboug/P5NWRReb.htm>

Knowing that he could not defeat the Canadians in direct confrontation, Dumont had hoped to force the Canadians to negotiate by engaging in a long-drawn out campaign of guerrilla warfare. He initially achieved a modest success against Middleton's column at the Battle of Fish Creek on 24 April 1885.

At Fish Creek, Saskatchewan, 200 Métis achieved a remarkable victory over a superior government force numbering 900 soldiers. The reversal, though not decisive enough to alter the outcome of the war, temporarily halted Major General Frederick Middleton's column's advance on Batoche. That was where the Métis would later make their final stand.

<sup>15</sup> Stanley, George, F.G., *Canada's Soldiers*, The MacMillan Co. of Canada, 1960, P. 255

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Meanwhile, Otter had quickly relieved Battleford, but On May 2, 1885, the Cree war chief Fine-Day defeated him at the Battle of Cut Knife near Battleford. Despite their use of a Gatling gun, and a flying column of Canadian militia and army regulars, government forces were defeated and forced to withdraw. Nonetheless, with the subsequent fall of Batoche and the capture of Riel, Poundmaker surrendered his forces on 23 May 1885.

Riel insisted on concentrating forces at Batoche but the outcome of the ensuing Battle of Batoche which took place from 9 May – 12 May was never in doubt. The greatly outnumbered Métis ran out of ammunition after three days of battle and siege. In the end, the Métis resorted to firing sharp objects and small rocks from their guns, until they were forced to retreat when Middleton's soldiers advanced in force. Riel surrendered on May 15. Gabriel Dumont and other participants escaped across the border to the Montana region of the United States.



**Col. Otter<sup>16</sup>**

On 15 May a dishevelled Riel surrendered to Middleton.

At the Battle of Frenchman's Butte on May 28, 1885, Major General Thomas Bland Strange led an NWMP detachment from Calgary, Alberta, but they were unable to defeat a Cree force under Big Bear who carried the day.

Big Bear's forces managed to hold out until the Battle of Loon Lake on 3 June, when a small detachment of North-West Mounted Police under the command of Major Sam Steele caught up to Big Bear's band which was moving northward after their victory at Frenchman's Butte. The Cree were almost out of ammunition, and were forced to flee after a short exchange of fire and the release of their hostages.

Despite fierce resistance, the back of the rebellion was broken. A total of 128 had been killed on both sides and over a hundred wounded.

Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald ordered a trial for Louis Riel to be convened in Regina, where he was tried before a jury of six English and Scottish Protestants, all from the area surrounding the city. The trial began on 28 July 1885, and lasted only five days.

Riel delivered two long speeches during his trial, defending his own actions and affirming the rights of the Métis people. He rejected his lawyer's attempt to argue that he was not guilty by reason of insanity. The jury found him guilty but recommended mercy. Nonetheless, Judge Hugh Richardson sentenced him to death, with the date of his execution initially set for 18 September 1885.

As the date of his execution approached, Riel regretted his opposition to the defence of insanity and vainly attempted to provide evidence that he was not sane. Requests for a retrial and an appeal to the Privy Council in England were denied.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.danielnpaul.com/LouisRiel.html>

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Prior to his execution, Riel was reconciled with the Catholic Church, and assigned Father André as his spiritual advisor. He was also given writing materials so that he could employ his time in prison to write a book. Louis Riel was hanged for treason at Battleford on 16 November 1885.

On 9 December, following the execution, Riel's body was returned to his mother's home in St. Vital, where it lay in state. On 12 December 1885, his remains were laid in the churchyard of the Saint-Boniface Cathedral following the celebration of a requiem mass.

Eleven days after Riel's hanging, the last unheralded act of the Rebellion played out when, on 27 November 1885, eight natives were hanged for murders committed during the Rebellion.



**Riel's Tombstone<sup>17</sup>**

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<sup>17</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis\\_Riel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Riel)

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