INDIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE NORTH-WEST REBELLION OF 1885

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The purpose of this paper is to examine the factors pertinent to the Indian involvement in the North-West Rebellion of 1885 and to distinguish between the groups who did participate and those who did not. An attempt will be made to explain the reasons for their respective involvement or non-involvement. This problem will be approached firstly by outlining the general sources of Indian discontent, and secondly by attempting a band-by-band analysis of the more specific reasons for the groups involvement. A similar method will be employed in the examples of non-participant groups.

The effects of the fur trade and white settlement on the Indians of North America are well-known and much-discussed topics in the literature. In the short period between the years 1870 and 1890, the Indian of the North-West was disposed as "monarch of all he surveyed" and white settlement had penetrated throughout the region.

Prior to 1870 the Indians were not as yet subjected to the intense pressure for land which was to make itself felt in later years. In reality, as G. F. G. Stanley (1936:201) maintains, this problem did not come into real contention until the 1880's. As a result, the Indian groups of the North-West had no reason to participate in the Red River Rebellion of 1869-70. In fact, some of the "mission Indians", among them Saulteaux Ojibway, were ready to join Colonel Dennis in his attempt to upset Louis Riel's Provisional
Government (Stanley 1936:81). However, when the pressure of white settlement did make itself felt in the North-West the Indians faced the brunt in the decade immediately preceding the Rebellion of 1885 (Thompson 1966:43).

After control over the North-West was relinquished by the Hudson Bay Company to the Government of Canada in 1870, the resulting "free trade" situation rapidly undermined the established fur trade economy of the Indian. The stabilizing effect of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly and administration was lost as American traders infiltrated the area, introducing disruptive competition, upsetting the Hudson's Bay Company value system, and reintroducing the alcohol trade, which as Stanley (1936:199) and others assert, brought about the "debauching and demoralization" of the Indians on the Plains.

According to Stanley (1936:202) these traders, realizing that settlement and Canadian Government control would destroy their business, conducted an extensive propaganda programme among the Indians and with the aid of liquor were painting a dark picture of the imminent settlement of the North-West. Accompanying these disturbing influences were disease and hunger as the first white settlers began to move in; take up land; and destroy the buffalo hunting. W. B. Fraser (1966:9) describes the impact of white settlement. "Then the whole economy of the prairie tribes vanished from the face of the earth."

R. E. Lamb (1957:134) cites the "prejudice and scorn"
displayed by the white settlers toward the Indian as a further cause of resentment towards the influx.

Understandably then, these Indians were becoming apprehensive, for already victims of the westward expansion of the eastern tribes pressured by the whites, they were witness to the Métis migration from Manitoba, and they were participants in the extinction of the buffalo—the basis of their own economy. The Indians were therefore anxious to negotiate treaties with the white man, similar to the Robinson Treaties of 1850, to ensure their position in the North-West.

However, even treaties were not to guarantee this. A. Macay, Indian Agent at Grand Rapids reports in September 1882 (Dominion of Canada 1883:44) "They complain that some parties have surveyed and run lines through their reserve, taking in even some of their buildings and gardens...They complain that a lumber company has erected and are operating a saw mill on their reserve, destroying and cutting their wood without any notice of their claims."

In the treaty negotiations which occurred in the 1870's, the Indians, whether by intentional design of the white negotiators or not, failed to comprehend the full significances and consequences of the treaties. By the early 1880's, however, the Indians were beginning to realize just what they had actually given up by submitting to the treaties. J. K. Howard (1952:289) states "Even Indians with a generation of Christian training, who had forsaken most of their pagan
beliefs, could not reconcile themselves to the idea that land
could be bought and sold and fenced." Stanley (1936:276)
states further "The misunderstanding between the native and
white conception of land tenure was one of the underlying
causes of the Indian discontent which broke out in 1885
into open rebellion."

The "indispensable" part played by the Métis in the
signing of these treaties is the first indication of their
special influence with the Indian, described by an American
consul in Stanley (1936:215) as "a degree of moral and phys-
cical control" which made itself apparent in white-Métis-
Indian transactions.

The Métis held this special trust of the Indians be-
cause of their consanguinity and their influence with and
ease of dealing with the white man. The Métis were put to
"good use" by traders in helping to establish trading links.

R. E. Lamb (1957:141) refers to one in particular --
Gabriel Dumont, as a prime mover in the Indian participation
in the Rebellion. Dumont was possessed by a vision of a
Métis-Indian empire in the North-West and ardently worked
for unity to stem the advancing white tide. He was a re-
nowned buffalo hunter and fighter and was fluent in Cree.
Thus Dumont and others of similar bent wielded great in-
fluence with the Indians of the North-West.

With the near-complete extinction of the buffalo heard
by the early 1880's the Indians were thrown back on the aid
of mission and state. More and more bands decided that it was time to settle down on reserves. However, the widespread failure of agriculture as a substitute means of subsistence further provoked the Indians who had been promised plenty and prosperity by taking reserves and toiling in the fields. A. Macay, Indian Agent for Grand Rapids in Treaty #5, reports in September 1882 (Dominion of Canada: 1883:44) that many of the reserves were "rocky and bushy", "very poor for farming purposes". Crop failures, droughts, blights, and early frosts seemed to prevent any large scale success at the Indians' new occupation. Stanley (1936:224) asserts that the years between 1877, when the Indians protested the North-West Council's "Buffalo Ordinance" restricting hunting, and 1883 when the last of the Indians were being forced to take reserves, were the most "desolate and destitute" years in their history.

"The situation was critical; starvation bred desperation. Throughout the North-West men went about with the constant fear of an Indian uprising before them" (Stanley 1936:225).

Many Indians had attempted to follow the retreating buffalo herds south into the United States, but the American authorities and the Indians there drove them back to Canada. During this time of frustration and starvation the Canadian Government began to press for the abandoning of traditional dances and ceremonies which were regarded as "unsettling". H. Reed, Indian Agent at Battleford, reports in August of 1882 that the annual dances were disrupting the work. "As they are of heathenish origin and more or less tend to create
a spirit of insubordination among the young men of the bands, I have this year discountenanced them as much as in my power lay, in which I was ably seconded by Lieut.-Col. Herchmer, commanding the Mounted Police at this post..." (Dominion of Canada 1883:50). These elements of the traditional culture were in reality, however, stabilizing, tension reducing forces in the society and it was the official disapproval which gave rise to "insubordination" as much as the ceremonies themselves.

Ever since the North-West Mounted Police had been posted to the North-West in 1873-74 the Indians had held a great respect and even a fear of these impressive manifestations of white power. Stanley (1936:334) believes that this respect and fear was important in preventing the Indians from rebelling before 1885. However the Indians' attitude began to change as their situation became more desperate and frustrating. The Crooked Lakes Outbreak in 1884 and the defeat of Major Crosier's Mounted Police at Duck Lake in March of 1885 persuaded many Indians that the Mounted Police were not, in fact, "invincible". They had lost what Stanley calls their "most valuable asset" -- the respect of the Indians. These Indians would no longer be intimidated by the presence of Mounted Police.

On the whole, authors are critical of the Macdonald administration in its inept handling of the situation;
particularly Macdonald's personal leadership in this area and his "poorly considered choice" of Vankoughnet as the Minister of the Interior portfolio. Stanley (1936:261) states "As it was, this very important department at this critical stage in North-West history, had neither an interested or capable head, nor a consistent North-West policy."

Failure to settle the land claims of the Indians as recognized in the Manitoba Act of 1870, indifference to the Indian protest over the "Buffalo Ordinance" of 1877, disregard of their field representatives warnings of unrest, the "ill-considered" and poorly timed cut back of financial aid during the repression years 1883-1885, and ignoring as a whole the North-West Petition of 1884, including a demand for "more liberal treatment of Indians"; are all examples of the general inefficiency, unconcern and delay displayed by the Macdonald administration in the realm of Indian affairs which ultimately led to the Indian participation in the Rebellion.

It is necessary to examine the personal influence of Louis Riel before leaving the general causes of Indian involvement in the Rebellion of 1885.

Many authors refer to Riel's influence among the Indians and all agree that he possessed a personal magnetism, a charisma, that drew people to him. C. P. Mulvaney (1971:24)

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1"Such parsimony came at a time when the red man had not yet achieved success in the settled life, but was still in great need of Government assistance" (Lamb 1957:148),
asserts that "The Half-breed and the Indians naturally looked to Louis Riel to secure for them the same privileges which they believed him to have won for the Half-breeds of Manitoba." As well, he was aware that the Indians were dissatisfied with the white administration of the North-West and he attempted to capitalize on this fact. However, Riel did not wield enough influence to cause the Indians to make crucial decisions at times when everything depended on immediate action. The Indians' traditional decision-making process and rule by discussion and consensus militated against this. As well, Riel's influence with the powerful leaders such as Poundmaker, who might have been able to arbitrarily make such decisions, was evidenced as very weak. Riel had urged Poundmaker to come to Batoche, but that Indian leader vacillated before starting out, too late as it turned out, to support Riel as he had wished.

Riel's influence was, on the main, a function of his Metis agents' agitation and constant circulation among the Indians. The loud protestations of H. W. Jackson, the leader of white agitation in Prince Albert, claiming that the North-West belonged to the Indians (Stanley 1936:303), also had great influence with the Indians. Riel encouraged the Indians to rebel by promising Fenian and American half-breed aid. He also impressed the supernatural-conscious Indians by correctly predicting an eclipse and by claiming divine guidance. Largely disoriented and confused by missionary
activity, many Indians accepted this fact. J. Hines, a Church Missionary Society missionary at Sandy Lake (1916:199) states "This was enough! and all the Indians for many miles around took up the cause with zeal, believing that they had the favour of the Great Spirit in doing so." Although Riel did not hold the complete "implicit confidence" of the Indians, as Stanley (1936:333) might suggest, he did succeed in encouraging the disaffected "malcontents" into definite action.

These, then, are the general underlying causes of Indian involvement in the Rebellion of 1832. A more detailed examination of the individual groups who participated follows.

The Crees residing in the North-West in the 1880's originated in the western Great Lakes area and had been forced to expand westward in the vanguard of the trade phenomenon. Consequently they were well aware of the characteristics of the white man from their long association with the trade system.

Big Bear was one of the most highly regarded and influential Cree chiefs in the North-West, among Indian and white alike. According to Fraser (1966:4) Lieutenant Governor E. Dewdney regarded Big Bear as "...the most influential of Indians on the Plains." and "...in large gatherings on the Plains he was sometimes accepted by several bands as head chief over the entire camp (Fraser 1966:4). Big Bear was not
what was regarded as a "company chief", for he maintained his independence from the fur trade and white influences. Therefore, Big Bear was to become the figurehead of the most active Indian bands in the Rebellion.

During the 1870's, Big Bear, wary of committing himself to a reserve until he could see the results of such an action, refused to sign treaties with the other bands at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt. For years he remained a free agent, roaming much as he pleased from reserve to reserve and across the border into the United States after buffalo. Consequently, his band became an attraction for the "irreconcilables" and "malcontents" who were becoming disenchanted with reserve life and who longed for the old life. This of course was a type of nativistic response. These Indians were disillusioned with the white promises of plenty and prosperity to be found by working on a reserve. R. Jefferson (1929:125) states "This hope of eventual escape from dire poverty, alone had kept their inexpert hands at work; had restrained their chafing openly at the assumption of superiority and domination of man, nearly as ignorant, and not more intelligent than themselves." Thus, when agriculture, because of drought, blight, early frosts, and poor land, proved to be demeaning and unrewarding work; Big Bear's life style began to appear better and better to the discontented on reserves. Undoubtedly, among those
who joined Big Bear there were some who would not have been satisfied no matter how well the Government's agriculture programmes had turned out, but their general failure made reserve life especially hard to bear. Consequently Big Bear's band assumed what Stanley refers to as a characteristic of "sullen independence".

It can be reasoned that Big Bear preferred to lead these "fearless and free" rather than sign a treaty, settle on a reserve and be recognized as a leader of the "meek and pliable". However this may be, Fraser (1966:13) asserts that many of those who swelled Big Bears band in the early 1880's were in reality following the more militant leaders who formed themselves around him. Nevertheless, starvation ultimately forced Big Bear to sign an adherence to Treaty #6 in December of 1882. However, by November 1884 he still had not chosen a reserve on which to settle his band.

Big Bear's band was forced to move north, away from the International Boundary and their ancestral homeland in the Cypress Hills, to a Woodland Cree reserve at Frog Lake. Dewdney, in his report to Macdonald of December 1885 (Dominion of Canada 1886:139), recognized that Big Bear was a "bad Influence" on the Saskatchewan Indians, but that their removal north was a "political necessity" to prevent "international complications arising from their bad conduct along the border."
Big Bear's proud men were obliged to work in the fields for their daily rations. A crop failure and severe winter in 1884-85, seemingly concomitant to all Indian agricultural programmes across the country, caused even more discontent among the members of his band.

During this period, Big Bear had often conferred with the famous Sioux war chief, Sitting Bull. From these contacts he must have become aware that it was indeed possible to resist the white man although Sitting Bull's situation must also have given Big Bear misgivings which tempered his thinking. Stanley (1936:338) states that Big Bear "...had constantly striven to better the lot of his people by peaceful methods fully realizing that the Indians had nothing to gain and all to lose by fighting the white man..."

In 1884, in an attempt to find a solution, Big Bear consulted Riel and Jackson. They assured him that Indian grievances would be redressed. In fact, they included this demand in the North-West Territories Petition of December 1884. Stanley (1936:303) states "...more liberal treatment for the aborigines became one of the principle planks of the North-West Party's platform."

Big Bear was also urged by Riel to continue his attempts at unifying the Indians by convening "councils" to bring about a concerted pressure group. Many sources concur that Big Bear's primary concern was Indian unity in order to press for redress of their grievances. Lamb (1957:148) states
"'Divide et impera' was Government policy with Indians and Big Bear saw the need for unity."

One such conference under the aegis of Big Bear, the Duck Lake-Carlton Conference in August 1884, drew up a petition of grievances which was forwarded to the Government in Ottawa. Lamb (1957:149) asserts "The reaction of the Government was a mixture of delay, misunderstanding, neglect, half-hearted attempts, disbelief and unconcern." There seemed to be no way to resolve their grievances except by violence.

Most sources agree that Big Bear was opposed to violence, but as Dewdney observed in November 1884, Big Bear was getting old and he was "ruled" by the more tempestuous spirits in his band (Dominion of Canada 1885:158). Wandering Spirit, Imasees (Big Bear's son), and Little Poplar, spurred on by Riel's agents and the Metis victory at Duck Lake on March 26, 1885; took control in Big Bear's absence and touched off the "massacre" at Frog Lake on April 12, 1885. Big Bear was now committed to the Rebellion whether he wished this or not.

On discovering that the white man could actually be defeated, and realizing that he was implicated in any event, Big Bear decided to attack Fort Pitt. In turn, the news of his easy, bloodless victory here supplied other Indians with encouragement, not to mention the plundered supplies, to enable them to join the Rebellion. Stanley (1959:343) states "Nearly half of the Indians who eventually surrendered,
joined Big Bear after the fall of Fort Pitt." It was this success of Big Bear which drew in the majority of those bands who participated in the Rebellion.

According to S. B. Steele (1915:299) of the Mounted Police, commander of the cavalry and scouts of the Alberta Field Force, a group of Chipewyan accompanied Big Bear and the Woodland Cree at the capture of Fort Pitt. Otherwise, Athapaskan bands were not to play an important role in the Rebellion.

The Metis victory at Duck Lake had included Indians of the Beardy and One Arrow reserves, but full commitment by the Cree did not come until Big Bear threw his powerful lot in with the Rebellion.

Beardy, who was regarded as a troublemaker by the Indian Agent of the Carlton Agency, was among those led by Big Bear, who refused to sign Treaty #6 at Fort Carlton in 1876. Beardy subsequently repudiated his stand and signed an adhesion.

J. A. Macrae, Indian Agent at Carlton, reports in August 1884 that the Indians here under Beardy were discouraged by the early frosts and drought which resulted in poor crops, while their "staple food" of muskrats were becoming scarce. He states further, "Beardy's band is still in a pagan state, and recieves no religious or other instruction" (Dominion of Canada 1885:80). Mulvaney (1971:54) states that Beardy
near the Red Pheasant Cree reserve. According to Stanley (1936:272) they were in the "most destitute condition" of all the Indians of the North-West. Dewdney reports in November 1884 that the "Stonies" were not at all successful in agriculture. "For several years an attempt had been made to raise grain and roots on this reserve, with hardly any results" (Dominion of Canada 1885:159). Jefferson (1929:38) states that they "...were in danger of starving to death." To further aggravate the situation Dedney reported that in April 1884 "Regular rations have been stopped to those of the band who have means of providing for themselves" (Dominion of Canada 1885:159). Under these circumstances then, on hearing the news of Duck Lake, they killed their farm instructor, Payne, looted the storehouse, and carrying the Red Pheasant band in their wake, hurried to Battleford to persuade Poundmaker, a powerful Cree leader, to join them.

The Crees of the Red Pheasant reserve thus became, to a certain extent, victims of circumstance. The Red Pheasant band had been settled on their reserve since 1873, and according to T. P. Wadsworth, Inspector of Indian Agencies and Superintendent of Indian Farms, in his report of December 1882 "... being near the headquarters at Battleford, have received a good deal of attention." (Dominion of Canada 1883:185). After enthusiastically beginning their agricultural programme Wadsworth reports them as "becoming apathetic" toward their work. As well, Metis agitators had been especially active on this reserve (Jefferson 1929:133), loudly
proclaiming Riel's supernatural powers. Again, victories at Duck Lake and Frog Lake made them realize that the white man could be defeated. Reacting to the impetuous actions of the nearby Assiniboine band and considering themselves "culpated", all but a few of the Red Pheasant band, who "took to the bush", joined Poundmaker and the Assiniboine at the "siege" of Battleford.

The Cree chief at Indian Head near Qu'Appelle was Piapot (Pie-apot). He, like Big Bear and Beardy, was "...a leader who had never enjoyed or needed the recognition of the Hudson Bay Company" (Fraser 1966:7). He had maintained an aloof and often petulant attitude toward white control. He had been a hold-out at Treaty #4 1874, but had later signed an adhesion. Piapot's special antagonism for Lieutenant Governor Dewdney is noted by Mulvaney (1971:58). As a result Piapot welcomed the news of Metis victories and eagerly joined the Rebellion.

The Beaver Lake and Green Lake Woodland Crees were drawn in to the conflict after communicating with Big Bear and Riel's agents (Stanley 1936:347). Rinning Sky, chief of a Cree band north of the Battle River, excited by accounts of Frog Lake, and after communicating with Big Bear, led his band on a raid on Battle River Crossing. These and similar groups engaged themselves in small raids which, although held little strategic importance, demonstrated the
general dissatisfaction and militancy of the Crees in Treaty #6. Stanley (1936:348) states "There were few bands in Treaty #6 who did not long for a return to the old days and the old ways; who did not desire to see the pale-skinned strangers driven from the land; and who did not take advantage, in some way or another, of the half-breed rising to strike a blow against the white man."

Little Pine and Lucky Man were chiefs of bands of southern Plains Cree who, like Big Bear, had held out at the treaty negotiations in 1876. Little Pine's band was well-equipped with horses and weapons and according to Mulvaney (1971:57) it was recognized that "...too much dependence was not to be placed on his loyalty." When the news of Frog Lake became known, Little Pine immediately quit his reserve and joined Poundmaker at Battleford.

Lucky Man, by November 1884 had not yet chosen a reserve and he ran into conflict with the Indian agent as his band was visiting Poundmaker, demanding rations. Lucky Man was despised by the Indian Agents and Dewdney (Dominion of Canada 1885:158) recommended that he be "disposed" of as a chief for he was a troublemaker and "utterly worthless" as a leader. Lucky Man also joined Poundmaker at Battleford.

As can be seen, Poundmaker was a very important and magnetic leader, second only to Big Bear in his influence with the Cree, Assiniboine and their allies.
Poundmaker had at first resisted the treaty signing. However, concern for the welfare of his people caused him to take up a reserve near Battleford and to attempt agriculture. At first he was eager and he encouraged his men to work in the fields (Dominion of Canada 1883:184). However, failure after failure and a series of what Stanley refers to as "unfulfilled promises" concerning a grist mill and disputes over rations caused a change in Poundmaker's attitude. J. A. Macdonald, in his capacity as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, in his report to the Governor General in 1883, referred to a dispute with Poundmaker, who wanted control of matters on his own reserve, but that this request was summarily refused (Dominion of Canada 1884:XLIX). C. E. Denny the Indian Agent at Fort MacLeod in his report in 1883, stated that the band was doing poorly and that Poundmaker was "always discontented" (Dominion of Canada 1884:123). To make matters worse, J. M. Rae, Indian Agent at Battleford reported in 1884 that the farm instructor at Poundmaker's reserve had been moved to another and that a drought had left the crops in a "miserable" state (Dominion of Canada 1885:84). Superintendent Crosier of the Mounted Police wrote that the Indians near Battleford were in a "destitute" condition and that if nothing was done to aid them he was sure that war would result (Breen 1971:2). C. B. Rouleau, a federal agent sent
to Battleford to investigate Metis grievances "...warned... that a hard winter would unite the Indian and Metis against government" (Breen 1971:1). The forthcoming winter of 1884-85 proved to be extremely hard.

During this time, Poundmaker himself was in a desperate frame of mind. According to Sluman (1967:36) Poundmaker believed that by giving in to the whites he had betrayed the gods of his fathers and that only by returning to his gods could the old way of life be restored. Poundmaker's frame of mind and desperate position played into the hands of Riel's agitators.

They promised aid from the Fenians and American half-breeds (which never materialized) and urged him to attack Battleford. Again it was the Assiniboine who were the prime movers. After killing their farm instructor they came immediately to Poundmaker and attached themselves to his band, thus implicating him in their actions. According to Sluman and Stanley, Poundmaker tried in vain to be a sobering influence, being hesitant to use violence. But he was overcome by Riel's agents and the Assiniboine. Poundmaker was named chief of the combined Cree-Assiniboine camp and was carried along by the rule of concensus to "lay siege" to (relatively ineffective) Battleford. As Fraser (1966:14) notes, the white man possessed "...a complete misunderstanding of the authority vested in an Indian chief by his
people...” Nowhere was there absolute control by leaders who were often pawns of the "masses".

Despite Mulvany’s (1971:51) adherence to the contrary, the Saulteaux Ojibway did become involved in the Rebellion. They were among the Cree who met General Middleton’s Expeditionary force in an indecisive battle at Batoche. Stanley (1936:305). The Ojibway were culturally and consanguinely related to the Cree and in the late seventeenth century had joined the Cree-Assiniboine coalition against the Sioux (Hickerson 1970:71). The early 1800’s found them exerting pressure on the Sioux of Minnesota and Wisconsin. As will be demonstrated later, this ongoing conflict played an important role in the position of the Sioux in Canada with regards to the Rebellion.

Not all the Indians who participated in the North-West Rebellion were as eager to do so as those mentioned above.

Ermine Skin and Bobtail, leaders of Cree bands north of the Battle River, were as Stanley (1936:344) states "lukewarm" to the rising. In his report of December 1882 Wadsworth states that these two bands were "properous and progressing" and were "...taking the greatest interest in farming operations" (Dominion of Canada 1883:180). In his report of 1883 Wadsworth again maintained that the Ermine Skin and Bobtail bands were prosperous. Despite their relatively good economic position, when news of the Rebellion broke, the more
impetuous spirits in the band won over. The two bands raided the Hudson Bay Company stores, but they later repudiated their actions under the influence of Father Scollen and Bishop Gradin (Steele:1915:214). As well, General Strange, commander of the militia at Calgary, threatened Ermine Skin and Bobtail that their future treatment depended on whether they joined the Rebellion or not.

Most sources report that leaders such as Big Bear, Poundmaker and others did not want the Indian protest to become violent. It was leaders such as Wandering Spirit, Imasees, Little Pine, Little Poplar and Lucky Man who undermined this more sober leadership and incited the more tempestuous into action. Their Woodland Cree brothers, on the other hand, were reluctant to participate in the armed revolt. They associated themselves with Big Bear and Poundmaker, but there was often conflict over what action was to be taken.

There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the Woodland Cree had traded with the English from Hudson's Bay. This relationship gave rise to the English and Scottish-Cree Metis of the North-West. Stanley (1935:5) regarded this group as more steady, conservative, hardworking and more committed to agriculture than their more volatile French-Cree counterparts. As well, because the Cree had been in contact with the French for a much longer period, there were many
more Métis related to the Plains Cree than were related to the Woodland Cree. Therefore, because of their small numbers and relatively conservative leaning, the English and Scottish-Cree Métis exerted little pressure to join the Rebellion. Many of these English-Scottish-Cree Métis, in fact, had the opposite effect by withdrawing their support of Riel along with the English of Prince Albert when violence finally erupted.

Secondly, the isolated position of the Woodland Cree, who were situated out of the direct path of settler pressure, were to a much lesser degree concerned about losing their land. Isolation played a major part in the non-involvement of many of the periphery bands.

Thirdly, Stanley (1936:362) asserts that the woodland Cree were quite satisfied with the plunder from Frog Lake, Cold Lake and Fort Pitt, preferring raiding on the periphery of the major fighting. D. G. Mandelbaum (1940:184) quotes Bishop Taché who noticed the great difference in war-like attitude between the two groups. The Plains Cree he noted, had a more "bloodthirsty nature".

Lastly, Jefferson (1929:135) maintains that for the Woodland Cree, a concrete Government relationship held more weight than the ephemeral promises of Riel's Rebellion. Therefore both the followings of Big Bear and Poundmaker were torn by dissention between the two groups. The Plains
Cree, by moving onto the Plains and adopting the lifestyle of the Indians who were there, were now perhaps closer to them than to their Woodland relatives.

Thus, it has been demonstrated that the participation in the Rebellion "snowballed" as the news of victories and the realization of the apparent weakness of the white man spread. An analysis of those bands who remained uninvolved in the Rebellion follows.

In general, one of the main reasons for the non-involvement of some groups of Indians in the North-West was the ploy of grubstake diplomacy by the Macdonald administration. In some special cases, as will be demonstrated, the Government was quick to dispense food clothing and presents and to dispatch missionary emissaries to pacify the Indians. The groups who received this special attention reflect the government's old attitude that the Indians should be catered to in relationship to their value as a military ally and the danger of them becoming an enemy. The Blackfoot Confederacy was the only group in the North-west taken seriously as a military threat and government attention reflects this.

The missionaries also played a major role in influencing the Indian groups who did not participate in the fighting. Ironically, it was these same missionaries who were, according to Stanley, responsible for the coalescing of the Metis
protest and petitioning in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of the Rebellion of 1885. However, they were alienated from the movement when the apostate Riel returned to the North-West, proclaiming himself a messenger of God. (Hines 1916:198). Moreover, the majority of missionaries in the North-West at the time were natives of Catholic Quebec, a traditional stronghold of both minuscule and maguscule "C" conservatism. Their efforts in opposing the Rebellion were as much directed against the Liberal whites, who appeared to be attempting the embarrassment of the Macdonald Government, as to upholding the philanthropic ideals of their religion (Lamb 1957:142).

Isolation was also a factor in determining who participated and who did not. As will be demonstrated, some of the far western bands were unaware of the Rebellion. On the other hand, the proximity of the near complete transcontinental railroad made it possible for the Government to rush troops into the area to control those who did not immediately take up the struggle. Stanley (1936:353) asserts that the quick movement of men and materials into the North-West prevented the growth of the revolt. "The rapidity with which these and subsequent troops were thrown into the North-West from Eastern Canada kept quiet the disaffected Indians and Metis in the Qu'Appelle valley who might otherwise have
joined the insurgents after their initial success."

The members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, although not the most numerous, were by far the most war-like and feared of all the Indians in the North-West. They were well equipped with horses and modern weapons. Moreover, they had not been scattered on reserves by the "divide et impera" policy of the Government, but were all situated within a sixty mile radius of Calgary (Mulvaney 1971:58). According to Breen (1971:6) an impending Indian rising was of more concern to the white settlers here than the Metis Rebellion. This "exaggerated fear", this "frontier mythology", which supposed the fierce barbarity of the Indian, was a result of the stereotype developed through the bloody Indian-white conflict in the United States which was projected onto the Indians of the North-West.

In fact, the Blackfoot Confederacy were recognized to, and in all probability did, hold the balance of power in the North-West at the time of the Rebellion. Fears of a Blackfoot uprising were heightened by the influence of Poundmaker, an adopted son of the powerful and important Siksika (or Blackfoot Proper) chief Crowfoot. These two leaders had negotiated a Cree-Blackfoot treaty in 1870. The Government, well aware of the importance of maintaining Blackfoot loyalty, or at least neutrality, was as Breen (1971:3) puts it
"...particularly determined that the Blackfoot not become involved." Thus, aid; in the form of food medicine, a doctor and presents; was quickly forthcoming. (Hanks 1950:24). Troops soon followed. Father Albert Lacombe, a man of extraordinary influence among the Blackfoot, was sent by Macdonald to persuade the Blackfoot to remain uninvolved.

This influence of Lacombe stemmed from his long association with the Indians and from his "fearlessness and daring" which so impressed the Indian of the day (Hughes 1920:107). Since 1865 when he became a "free lance" missionary on the Plains, Lacombe had been a good friend and tower of strength to the Blackfoot during the difficult period of change immediately preceding the Rebellion. He was with them during Cree attacks, hunger and epidemics and he had guided them through the trying times of the treaties and the coming of the railroad.

Lacombe staged an impressive "peace conference" with Lieutenant Governor Dewdney on April 11, 1885 and Blackfoot intentions to remain uninvolved were relayed to Macdonald in a telegram from Crowfoot. On receipt of this assurance Macdonald considered raising a Blackfoot corps under Crowfoot to combat the rebels (Breen 1971:3). This was perhaps intended as more of a psychological move rather than a military strategem; hoping to capitalize on the fear generated by the Blackfoot. *It was, however, shelved as impractical.*
As well, as a whole, the Blackfoot were under much less influence from the Metis population. They had not been involved long enough with white traders to develop a large Blackfoot-white Metis population, as the Cree had done for example. This lack of Metis influence is illustrated when one of Riel's emissaries came to Crowfoot's camp. He was arrested by the Mounted Police with no violent reaction by the Blackfoot.

Prior to this incident the image of the North-West Mounted Police among the Blackfoot had been extremely good, since Colonel McClaud had been instrumental in their signing Treaty #7 in 1877. Policeman Steele, typically maintained this special image and high regard of the Mounted Police by barging into the midst of Crowfoot's camp and arresting the Metis agitator. Steel (1915:184) asserts that, at the time, this decisive action prevented the Blackfoot from joining the Rebellion. Allowing for personal bias, this is perhaps quite accurate. Most authors agree that this respect for the power of the white man manifested in the North-West Mounted Police, despite its waning in some areas prior to the Rebellion, was a crucial inhibiting factor in the decision whether or not to join the Rebellion.

A more fundamental reason underlying the Blackfoot Confederacy's non-involvement in the Rebellion can be found in the alignment of the age-old enemies and ongoing antagonisms up to the Rebellion in 1885. The Cree-Blackfoot hostility was one of these.
Even though these two groups had negotiated a treaty in 1870, it seemed to be more of a personal friendship between Crowfoot and Poundmaker than it was a real cessation of hostilities between the Blackfoot and Cree as a whole. Jefferson (1929:50) states "So, though Cree and Blackfoot no longer fought on sight, they stole each other's horses whenever chance offered and redressed wrongs in their own old way." As late as 1883, W. Focklington, Indian Sub-Agent at Blackfoot Crossing, reported that Crowfoot was complaining that his horses were being stolen by the Cree. (Dominion of Canada 1884:84). Cree involvement in the Rebellion would therefore seem to be a valid reason for the Blackfoot to remain loyal to the Government, or neutral at least.

Crowfoot was a chief of the Siksika or Blackfoot Proper in the Blackfoot Confederacy, who came to ascendency mainly because he was skilled in dealing with the white man. In signing Treaty #7 in 1877, he had driven a relatively hard bargain and had obtained choice land for his bands on the Bow River. Howard (1952:61) states that the were "well rationed" and from all reports they were making progress in agriculture. Dewdney wrote in 1883 that among the Indians of Treaty #7 "...there appeared to be unusual contentment and gratitude to the Government for their treatment of them..." (Dominion of Canada 1884:103).
Crowfoot was regarded by all as an intelligent and influential leader. He was well aware that the Blackfoot held the balance of power on the Saskatchewan and that the Government was prepared to act to ensure their loyalty. Father Lacombe, who Stanley credits with a deep understanding of the situation, wrote that these Indians, realizing their powerful position in the North-West, were determined to get as much out of the "Department" as possible (Stanley 1936:362). The Blackfoot were indeed well-courted by the Government's grubstake diplomacy. Only when Poundmaker, Crowfoot's adopted son, was imprisoned at the end of the Rebellion did he lose faith in the Government.

The Piegan and Blood were also members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, although often overlooked in the shadow of the dominant Siksika. In reality however, they were actually in a stronger position than the Siksika, for epidemics had ravaged the latter group in the early 1880's.

For reasons similar to those of the Siksika they did not become involved in the Rebellion. C. E. Denny, Indian Agent at Fort McCloud reported in 1883 that the Blood and Piegan reserves were very successful and that they worked industriously even during the winter months. He also reports that Crees had stolen horses from the Blood (Dominion of Canada 1884:78-79). Steele (1915:211) reports that Superintendent Cotton of the Mounted Police maintained constant patrols of the Blood and Peigan reserves, thus keeping
these Indians aware of the white power and presence.

As well, at a time when other Indians in the North-West were having their rations cut, the Bloods were exempted from this austerity programme. T. P. Wadsworth, inspector of Indian Agencies and Farms, reported in 1884 "It has afforded me with much pleasure to find such is not the present intention of the Department; if it were, very serious trouble would result, as these Indians are a powerful tribe, rich in horses, with many warriors, well-armed, and a large supply of ammunition" (Dominion of Canada 1885:88). This is another indication of the Government's selective grubstake policy.

In the same report Wadsworth states that the Piegans were "very well off" and "The Piegans have generally been looked upon as the best Indians in the treaty." Implicit in this is that the Piegans were well-satisfied with the status quo before the rebellion and did not "complain" as much as others had.

As well, Dewdney had persuaded Crowfoot to wield his influence with these two groups. In his telegram to Macdonald Crowfoot stated "J'ai envoyé des emissaires aux Gens-du-Sang et aux Piegans, cosignataires de notre traité, pour leur faire part de notre ligne de conduite et de nos résolutions pour la durée des hostilités..." (Le Chevallier 1941:98). Under Crowfoot's influence, both Red Crow of the Bloods and North Axe of the Piegans thus promised loyalty
to the Government.

Indian Agent Pocklington reports in August 1885 that the Indians of the Blood reserve had begun to work enthusiastically at their farm work in the spring of 1885 and that they were hardly disturbed by the news of the Rebellion (Dominion of Canada 1886:73). He goes on to state "Too much praise cannot be given Red Crow for his staunch loyalty during the rebellion, as from the first I was not in the least anxious about him and his followers. The same must be said of the Piegans. It is a positive fact that Red Crow had tobacco sent him more than once, urging him to rise, but in every instance he sent the tobacco back, and would not listen to the accompanying messages" (Dominion of Canada 1886:74).

The Sarcee, an Athapaskan group, were "junior" members of the Blackfoot Confederacy. They had been driven south by the Cree-Assiniboine westward pressure at the end of the seventeenth century. They assimilated the Blackfoot "genre" of Plains material and non-material culture while maintaining their own language. As. D. Jennie (1922:3) states, they "...aligned themselves whole-heartedly with the Blackfoot." Despite the Cree-Blackfoot treaty of 1870, the memory of Cree-Assiniboine aggression in the past was not extinguished. Therefore, it was highly unlikely that a small, relatively powerless group such as the Sarcee, who were long antagonists of the Cree and Assiniboine, would join them in fighting the
whites.

The attitude of the Cree bands who did refrain from participating in the Rebellion of 1885 was due in large part to the efforts of the Church Missionary Society represented by J. Hines and J. McKay. Hines was stationed at Starblanket's (or Ah-tah-ka-koop) band at Sandy Lake, while McKay was missionary to Big Child's (or Mistawasis) band situated at Snake Plain. Their efforts were directed to teaching these Indians to "...pray for deliverance from privy conspiracy and rebellion..." (Hines 1916:213). These two bands were apparently doing well in their agriculture programmes for Macdonald especially pointed out to the Governor General in 1884 that the Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop bands were nearly self-sufficient and that the missions and schools were quite active. Mistawasis was described by Mulvaney (1971:54) as a "devout Presbyterian" who was "...not at all likely to take action for or against the insurgents."

Their conviction to remain neutral was fortified when they were summoned to Fort Carlton by the Mounted Police and interrogated as to where their sympathies lay. On a promise of military protection Mistawasis and Ahtahkakoop chose to remain neutral (Hines 1916:205). After the fall of Carlton, both bands fled to the protection of Prince Albert. Indian Agent J. B. Lash reported in July of 1885 "Chief Mistawasis
and Ah-tah-ka-kooop deserve great credit for the stand they took, and the manner in which they controlled their bands; situated a short distance from the headquarters of the rebels, every effort was made to induce them to take up arms" (Dominion of Canada 1886:126).

The Crees of Stoney Lake, also under Church Missionary Society influence, remained neutral to the conflict. One Indian, referring to the missionary, confided to the Indian agent after the Rebellion "...it was not because they had no cause for complaint of his treatment of them, nor yet because they were afraid of the consequences of being rebels, that they remained neutral, but naming his missionary, said 'That is the man that kept us quiet, and yet it was not he but the religion he has taught us!'" (Hines 1916:213).

At the time of the Rebellion of 1885, the Sioux in Canada were also a force to be reckoned with. These Indians were residing in Canada as refugees from the violence in the United States. The first main stream consisting of Santee Sioux bands under Little Crow, Standing Buffalo and White Cap arrived in the years following the "Minnesotal Massacre" in 1862. The next major migration began after the defeat of Custer in 1876 and lasted until Sitting Bull's Teton Sioux arrived in 1877. As has been mentioned the Cree, Assiniboine and Ojibway were traditional enemies of these Sioux and
harrassed them while they remained in Canada (Laviolette 1944:91).

As early as 1825, the Prairie du Chien treaty had been negotiated to put a stop to this trade-disruptive antagonism. However, the peace was broken by 1839 and intermittent warfare continued up to the Rebellion.

As a result, this antagonism caused the Sioux to remain largely aloof from the other Indians of the North-West (Kinnaird 1966:73). Moreover the Sioux were scattered widely over the area and they were discouraged and disheartened by their defeats at the hands of the whites across the border. They also did not want to jeopardize their refuge in Canada by opposing the Canadian Government who had granted them reserves and food in their time of need. In fact, Kinnaird (1966:75) states that the Government had the Sioux "...under the soothing influence of much tea and tobacco..." --another example of the discriminatory grubstake diplomacy. The government undoubtedly realized that the Sioux were a war-like people.

The reports of the Department of Indian Affaires show that the Sioux had reason to be contented. The small band of Sioux on a reserve near Turtle Mountain were "prosperous", "nearly self-sufficient, and there was good hunting and fishing in the area" (Dominion of Canada 1884:LIIV). Macdonald reports in 1834 that White Cap's band was doing well on a reserve near Prince Albert and that they were often
employed by the whites there (Dominion of Canada 1885:XLII).
Thus the great majority of the Sioux who remained in Canada
during the Rebellion were neutral to the conflict, being
quite satisfied with their situation. During this time a
number of Sioux were even circulating, begging and working
for the whites.

Agent A. McDonald counteracted Riel's agents and persuaded
most of the Cree, Ojibway and Assiniboine bands in the In-
dian Head Agency to stay out of the fighting. However,
Piapot's band was a notable exception and a small number of
File Hill Indians raided outposts, among them York Colony.

Indian Agent J. Reader attributed the non-involvement of
these Indians to the efforts of the Church Missionary Society
who had been active in the area for forty years (Dominion
of Canada 1886:65). He also reports that the Pas Mountain
Indians near Fort a le Corne had fled not wishing to become
involved in the revolt.

In the Battleford Agency of Treaty #6 the Cree bands
of Moosomin and Thunder Child, on hearing what was about to
take place, moved north of the Saskatchewan River before the
Rebellion began. In general contrast to the other Indians
in the Battleford Agency, it was reported that the Moosomin
band had a "beautiful harvest...it must be admitted that
these Indians have done well...They are well supplied with
oxen" (Dominion of Canada 1885:151:52). These bands then,
had reason to be satisfied with the "status quo" and to remain
uninvolved in the Rebellion.
According to the reports to the Government the Cree and Chipewayan Indians of the Edmonton Agency were very unsettled at the news of the Rebellion, coupled with "messages" from Big Bear and Hiel. However, the influential chief of the Two Hills band, Pass-pass-chase, remained loyal to the Government and he discouraged the dances which were being held and tried to soothe the excitement which had grasped the Indians. However, the excitement quickly died down as the report of 1885 states "The arrival of Gen. Strange and the news of Gen. Middleton's successes intimidated them, causing an immediate settling down to work and many professions of loyalty" (Dominon of Canada 1886:71). Just as some Indians had been encouraged to join the Rebellion because of news of defeats of the whites, others thought it wiser to remain uninvolved when they realized the whites were now winning the battles.

After the Rebellion had been put down, the faith placed in the Government by the non-involved Indians was rewarded. The Government was quick to redress their grievances and to grant in Stanley's words (1936:378) "...extensive concessions and numerous presents...". As well, the loyal chiefs such as Crowfoot, Ahtakakoop and Mistawasis were treated to a "gala tour" of Eastern Canada, which also served, as Hines (1916:310) states, as "...an object-lesson of the white man's power."

In implementing their policy, the Government had attempted
in the words of Fraser (1966:11) "...to bridge a thousand years of history overnight and their policy was designed to force rather than assist the transition." In doing so, the Government had alienated the trust of many Indians in the North-West, leaving them open to the agitation of Niel and his Metis. On their part, the Metis had little hope of succeeding. The opening of the transcontinental rail-road had given firm control of the North-West to the Government. The Indians themselves were divided, and alone, were incapable of resisting the "advancing white tide".

From the beginning, far-seeing Indian leaders, such as Crowfoot, Big Bear and Poundmaker, had recognized the hopelessness of a violent reaction. They realized that the Indian had more to lose by opposing the white man than by accommodating to him. However, the latter two leaders, against their own judgement, were drawn into the conflict by the more impetuous sub-leaders and the institution of rule by discussion and consensus.

In conclusion, this paper has attempted, although it could not deal with all the Indian groups, to describe the factors involved in the Indian participation in the North-West Rebellion of 1885.

After the Rebellion, Dewdney attempts to explain Indian involvement as follows:
"It is natural when overt acts were committed by the young, ill-disposed men, that loyal and well-disposed Indians should fear that vengeance would be wreaked upon them...and that this feeling, coupled with the necessity...of obtaining food, prevailed upon them to gather about the rebel headquarters, where, when the latter were attacked, they became more or less involved in the skirmishes that ensued, from various motives, ranging from sympathy with the half-breeds to self protection" (Dominion of Canada 1886:40).

In summation, Indian involvement was affected by the following factors (in an attempted order of decreasing importance): The Government's discriminating, preferential attention given to economic conditions on reserves and expressions of grievances, the influence of missionaries, the regard in which the Mounted Police were held, the influence of the Metis, grubstake diplomacy employed by both sides, strength of nativistic response, the respective effects of the news of victories over the whites and later defeats, and finally, underlying all these factors, the pattern of traditional antagonisms. This last factor is but rarely considered in the literature, and in the opinion of this writer, should be afforded more importance. When the wide linguistic, cultural and historic differences, with long standing antagonisms are taken into account, this underlying structure of Indian life cannot be lightly overlooked.

Even after his desperate and costly struggle, the Indian of the North-West was largely forgotten in the racial and political furor which developed after the execution of Louis
Riel. The Indian apparently, had vainly expended his existing energy and resources in the Rebellion. He was embarked on a path of assimilation or extinction without resisting again until years later.

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