

1885

Metis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy?



Don McLean

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INTRODUCTION

The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research was established by the Association of Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan in 1980 after a series of meetings spanning the previous decades. To improve education for Indian and non-Indian people and to substantiate and integrate the history and the goals now being articulated by the Indian and non-Indian people. This book is one of the products of the unified movement of the Métis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan, a way of looking at history. One can consider that on the social movement, the individual or both. A change of some history is to transcend the provincial and legal authority of nation building versus the individual. It does not place an emphasis on the individual, but on the individual. This book simply examines the individual, approaches history, and to view later in a national context.

Another approach to Canadian history has been the technique of sociology. The dominant ideology and interpretation of social historical have, for the most part, has defined the historical construction as an assembly of parties, some of their responsibility to lead Canada out of colonialism and onto the political policy of the new Canadian government. The political systems which have been characterized are portrayed as the correction upon which the Canadian history would be constructed. Furthermore, Canadian government and and moderating efforts to harmonize the diverse and competing interests which characterized the national mosaic.

One of the most controversial episodes arising out of consideration and the development of Canadian national policy

INTRODUCTION

The Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research was established by the Association of Metis and Non-Status Indians of Saskatchewan in 1980, after a series of meetings spanning the two previous decades. To improve education for Indigenous people and to substantiate alternate interpretations of history are the goals now being accomplished by the Institute's staff of eighty people. This book is one of the specific outcomes of the unified movement of the Metis and Non-Status Indians.

There are various ways of looking at history. One can concentrate on the social movement, the individual, or both. A favourite strategy of some historians is to transpose the benevolent and legal authority of nation building versus the individual. Tremendous effort is placed on analyzing the characteristics of individual leaders. This book subtly criticizes the individualist approach to history.

Another approach to Canadian history has been the technique of apology. The dominant ideology and interpretation of selected historical facts, for the most part, has depicted the "Fathers" of Confederation as an assembly of patriots conscious of their responsibility to lead Canada out of colonialism into nationhood. The national policies of the new Canadian government are portrayed as the cornerstones upon which the Canadian ideal would be constructed. Furthermore, Canadian governments and political systems which followed confederation are seen as neutral and moderating efforts to harmonize the diverse and competing interests which characterized the national mosaic.

One of the most controversial episodes arising out of confederation and the development of Canadian national policy

CHAPTER ONE

The Hudson's Bay Company

is the role of the Metis in Western Canadian economic and political development. The historical and contemporary story of the Metis demands a re-examination of Canadian history.

This book takes a critical look at the causes of the 1885 armed struggle between the Metis of the Northwest and the Canadian forces. It presents documented evidence that the Canadian government may have conspired to force the Metis into a state of armed rebellion. By 1884, the Canadian confederation plan was in jeopardy because of the imminent bankruptcy of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company (CPR) before the line was completed to the West Coast. And the "rebellion" coming at precisely the right time, saved the CPR from bankruptcy, and the federal Conservative government from political limbo, by uniting the West to the Canadian East in a tidal wave of patriotic fervor.

This book examines both the relationship of the CPR and the Hudson's Bay Company to the initiation of the conflict. Seen from this critical perspective, the explanations given by past Canadian historians fail to answer the questions raised. Indeed, historians will now have to re-examine their facts in order to deal with this serious challenge to our present understanding of the causes of the 1885 conflict.

Keith Goulet,
Executive Director
Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native
Studies and Applied Research

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