



**FINDING DIRECTIONS WEST:
READINGS THAT LOCATE AND DISLOCATE
WESTERN CANADA'S PAST**
Edited by George Colpitts and Heather Devine

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J.Z. LaRocque: A Métis Historian's Account of His Family's Experiences during the North-West Rebellion of 1885

Heather Devine

Introduction

Between 1867 and 1885, the Métis and their First Nations allies were the only Indigenous groups in the country to openly defy the newly established Canadian government. Under Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, the fledgling government set out to secure the vast region of Western Canada in order to establish its dominion sea to sea, and to keep the region from falling into American hands. The Canadian annexation of Western Canada began with the purchase of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1869, a real estate transaction complicated by the refusal of the Métis people of Red River to allow their homeland to be sold. The Métis resistance to the actions of the Canadian government, which included the takeover of Fort Garry and the forced negotiation of land, religious, and language rights for the Métis, resulted in the creation of Manitoba. The eventual acquisition of the entire region of Rupert's Land, followed by the negotiation and signing of a series of numbered treaties with the tribal

groups in what is now Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, served to make these large areas of land available for agricultural settlement.

The government's failure to deliver on promises of land tenure to the Métis, followed by its failure to keep its treaty promises to the Blackfoot and Cree people now on reserves, resulted in a short but bloody uprising known as the Northwest Rebellion of 1885.¹ The revolt was successfully suppressed by the Canadian government, and the leader of the uprising, Louis Riel, was hanged for treason in November 1885. A series of changes to the Indian Act – most of them punitive – were made to prevent similar uprisings from taking place again. The Métis were issued scrip, a certificate payable to the bearer, for either agricultural land or cash, in recognition and extinguishment of their Aboriginal rights. Consequently, the remaining arable lands in the West were officially opened to agricultural settlement.

Life for the Métis after 1885 was difficult. Some of the Métis had troubles claiming and keeping their scrip, and by the turn of the twentieth century, these people were homeless, with no means of survival in the agricultural settlements that quickly sprang up. Some landless Métis chose to rely on hunting and gathering to survive, and soon migrated to isolated regions farther to the north and west where they could continue their traditional way of life.

But many of the Métis descendants of buffalo hunters and traders who had occupied the northern plains for generations chose to remain in the southern regions of Western Canada, despite widespread prejudice and discrimination due to their race, their religion, and their French and Indigenous languages. Moreover, the dominant historical narratives of the day branded the Métis as traitors to Canada, an impulsive, improvident, even violent people who had chosen to follow a madman.²

Between 1885 and 1914, an estimated three million people emigrated to Canada, and most of these immigrants were destined for Western Canada.³ The pressure to gain access to arable land soon resulted in widespread discrimination against anyone who was foreign or non-white, did not speak English as their mother tongue, or practised Roman Catholicism. The Indians on reserves were largely ignored by the white population, as the punitive policies of the Indian Act severely restricted their movements off the reserve.⁴

By the 1920s and 1930s, a new, pathological Métis identity had entered the public consciousness, largely due to the economic and social

marginalization that had accelerated since the collapse of the world economy in 1929. The Métis (colloquially referred to as “half-breeds”) were considered to be a failed people, whose racial and cultural characteristics rendered them unfit to compete successfully in the New West. Their lack of formal education made it difficult for them to get permanent employment, and for those Métis unfortunate enough to be indigent, there was no free access to medical services or schooling. They populated the ditches beside the major roads, and led a precarious existence based on seasonal farm labour, handouts, some hunting and gathering, and petty crime. The transformation of the once-proud Métis into “The Road Allowance People” was complete – or almost complete.⁵

But there were other Métis who had avoided the fate of their less fortunate kin. It is often overlooked, or simply unacknowledged, that some Métis people had the resources necessary to weather the transition from a frontier to a settled society. These individuals, often part of officer families from the Hudson’s Bay Company, or descended from the numerous families of independent traders in the region, had managed to establish small homesteads and secure title to their land. Some of these people also possessed a degree of formal education, and set out to adapt to the new economic reality forced upon them. Others had managed to establish kin and commercial relationships with the new arrivals, or maintained the remnants of older ties rooted in the fur trade society that once dominated the region. In order to function successfully in the racially charged, post-frontier environment of Western Canada, the “Respectable Métis,” as they were sometimes called, chose to downplay their mixed ancestry publicly.⁶ If they spoke Michif or Cree or Saulteaux or French, they did so at home, with their relatives and friends. Some also quietly chose not to pass along these languages to their children, as they were no longer considered useful skills. The beaded clothing, the kinnikinnick, and the buffalo guns were tucked away under beds, in boxes and trunks, and in closets. The songs and stories of the past remained in the minds and hearts of the old people, to be shared on special occasions like *Le Jour D’An* (New Year’s Day). Their children went to school, became adults, and intermarried with their non-Métis neighbors.

Over time, the external trappings of Métis culture and heritage had been suppressed so profoundly that by the late twentieth century, it appeared as if the diverse Métis communities scattered throughout the

southern regions of Western Canada had completely vanished from the landscape.⁷ In fact, they had not. As interest in Métis culture and heritage grew after the centenaries of the 1869 and 1885 Métis uprisings, a new generation of researchers would revisit the historical documents of the nineteenth century, looking for information that would shed light on the lives of previously neglected racial and gender minorities, and provide usable data for the political and legal battles following the patriation of Canada's Constitution in 1982.⁸

Across Western Canada and into the northern United States, various cultural organizations and projects were launched to compile and preserve Métis folklore and music.⁹ But what also emerged was a large body of both published and unpublished work, some written by Métis people themselves, some written by people who lived and worked alongside the Métis. These published works were not in the form of school textbooks or scholarly, "academic" histories. Instead they thrived in a largely neglected genre of literature – the field of vernacular history.¹⁰

Vernacular history: A definition

What is vernacular history? Recent scholarship by Western Canadian historian Lyle Dick sets out to introduce the term "vernacular history," to define the characteristics of this genre, and to provide a framework for examining non-academic sources of historical information in order that they might take their rightful place within a broader, more inclusive conception of what academics define as "historiography."¹¹

The origin of the term "vernacular history" is partially rooted in existing definitions of "vernacular literature" and "vernacular architecture." Vernacular literature, by and large, refers to any literature written in the everyday speech of the common people. In terms of European literature, vernacular literature was any written work that was not expressed in Latin. Vernacular architecture is the term used to describe buildings that are built using local, traditional techniques and materials, and are not designed by professional architects.

The term "vernacular history" as discussed by Lyle Dick, is "grass-roots historical practice in North America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."¹² Like vernacular literature and vernacular architecture,

vernacular history is a product of the common people, in that it tends to be composed of information collected from, and compiled by, citizens of local communities.

Vernacular historians have ranged from community historians to individual scholars to so-called history buffs, and their practice has assumed many forms, from informal pioneer reminiscences to highly crafted works of scholarship, exemplifying varying levels of talent, experience, and imagination.¹³

The authors of these grassroots histories may incorporate information from secondary historical sources produced elsewhere but tend to rely on their own personal experiences; original documents and interviews; creative works, such as spoken word, music poetry and visual art; and objects and ephemera collected directly from community residents.

Vernacular histories may follow some research and publication conventions, such as the third-person style of writing, citation of sources, or even formal consent forms for inclusion of personal information, but this is not always deemed necessary, or even desired, by its practitioners.

One of the major criticisms of vernacular history is that it may not display the much-vaunted objectivity of academic writing:

Vernacular authors have often not displayed scholarly detachment; their writing has tended to be informed by direct experience and animated by a passionate involvement with their subjects of study.¹⁴

Another shortcoming of vernacular narratives, according to Dick, is that they are “dialogic” in the Bahktinian sense, in that the narrative may change over time according to the nature of the audience and their interaction with, and response to, the author’s account. This fluidity of content in some vernacular accounts means that they lack logical coherence, which undermines their credibility as trustworthy sources of information.¹⁵

During the course of the twentieth century, historical production became a discrete academic specialty, and history as written by professional scholars was privileged over vernacular history in terms of its overall validity and credibility. As a result, vernacular history became

marginalized and eventually discredited as a source of reliable information about the past.¹⁶

Dick goes on to note that while vernacular historians “share the common experience of operating outside dominant discourses of power and authority,” this does *not* mean that vernacular narratives necessarily go against the prevailing dominant historical viewpoints.¹⁷ Community historians who share the same worldview and value systems as professional scholars are often happy to incorporate perspectives that reinforce their own opinions, even to the point of excluding credible data that challenge the validity of the prevailing historical scholarship. As a result, the vast majority of local community histories produced prior to the 1970s demonstrate a relentlessly homogeneous portrait of Western Canada, where the narrative of the past starts with the appearance of the first homesteader and goes on to feature the family biographies of subsequent arrivals – all presented in alphabetical order according to surname.

More recently Lyle Dick has revisited the topic of Western Canadian vernacular history, this time focusing on the writing of early Manitoba history. His rationale for this examination is to refute the common assumption that Western Canadian historiography is a product of the period *after* the creation of Manitoba and after the founding of history as an academic specialty. Instead, he argues that there were vernacular historians resident in the Red River Settlement after the initial arrival of the Selkirk settlers in 1812–13 who were active up to, and after, the establishment of the province of Manitoba in 1870. Although these writers were not professional historians, Dick argues, their work was skilfully done, and they were motivated by “a sense of civic duty to write on issues of pressing social, cultural and political importance to their community.”¹⁸

He then profiles a select group of vernacular historians of the Red River region; Pierre Falcon Jr.; Alexander Ross; the Reverend James Hunter; Joseph James Hargrave; and Donald Gunn. Of this group, Dick concludes that it is the works of Pierre Falcon Jr. and Donald Gunn that resonate today, largely due to their occupational and kin-based connections to the “grassroots” citizenry of the colony that enabled them to supplement their own first-person accounts of historical events with the shared experiences of their relatives, friends, and neighbours. Moreover, Pierre Falcon and Donald Gunn brought different values and attitudes to the writing of Red River history. Falcon expressed Red River history through satirical poems

and songs that were entertainment as much as chronicle, first shared orally by Falcon, and then repeated or sung by his fellow Métis while lazing around campfires, paddling canoes, travelling in hunting brigades and cart trains, and settling in their cabins and villages.¹⁹ Donald Gunn chose to challenge the narratives of his British contemporaries (many with family connections to the Hudson's Bay Company) by questioning the leadership and judgment of the Red River elite.

In Manitoba, after the Red River Resistance of 1869–70, and after Red River had been overwhelmed with Anglo-Protestant settlers from Ontario, a cadre of twenty-six prominent citizens of Manitoba established the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba in January 1879.²⁰ Many of the founding members of the organization made up the Anglo-Canadian ruling class of the new province of Manitoba. As a result, Métis accounts of the Red River Resistance of 1869–70 and the Riel Rebellion of 1885 were largely ignored, even though Roman Catholic clerics did publish religious histories of Western Canada that incorporated information on the Métis. The cohort of professional historians that existed in the universities of Ontario and Quebec, in the heartland of the young Dominion of Canada, largely maintained the status quo.²¹ Because the history profession was in its infancy, this first generation of historians was quite comfortable incorporating, and building upon, the vernacular historical accounts of the respected citizens of Manitoba and Ontario, many of whom circulated in the same business and social circles as they did. These nascent academics did *not* entertain the perspectives of intellectuals outside of their linguistic and ethnic cohort.²²

The former elites of Red River – the Francophone and Métis businessmen, professionals, and clerics – were sufficiently offended by what they perceived as “errors” in the depiction of their community’s history that they formed an organization, *La Union Nationale Métisse Saint.-Joseph de Manitoba*, in 1909. They later engaged August-Henri de Trémaudan, a Québec-born historian raised in France, to research and write their community’s history, and he began publishing articles and books in the 1920s.²³

Despite the dominance of non-Métis scholars in the area of Métis historiography, it would be incorrect to assume that there was lack of interest amongst Métis people in writing their history. In fact, in the years prior to the founding of *La Union Nationale Métisse* in 1909, a young Métis man from the Qu’Appelle Valley in Saskatchewan made the decision to sell his

3.1 Joseph Zépherin LaRocque. Courtesy of Anna Marie Willey, Regina, SK.



scrip and move to Winnipeg to get an education. His name was Joseph Zépherin LaRocque.

What follows is an examination of some selected narratives left behind by one of the very few Métis vernacular historians of the early twentieth century: Joseph Zépherin (J.Z.) LaRocque of Lebret, Saskatchewan. Mr. LaRocque is perhaps most widely remembered today as one of the earliest post-1885 Métis political activists – a founder and former president of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan, and a lifelong member of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party. His ongoing political collaboration and friendships with prominent Saskatchewan Liberals, particularly James G. Gardiner, provided LaRocque with reasonably steady employment in provincial and federal government jobs for about thirty years (ca. 1914–44), including an appointment as a member of the Saskatchewan Provincial Police, and a position as a provincial fish and wildlife officer. These government posts would provide income aside from LaRocque’s farming activities during the bulk of his working life.

Despite his very busy political and work-related activities, Joseph also possessed a keen avocational interest in the human and natural history of the Qu'Appelle Valley, a passion to which he was able to devote additional time as he reached middle age. He had joined the Saskatchewan Historical Society in the 1930s, and served on its board of directors for several years. He had been active in collecting and preserving original documents and artifacts of interest, many of which he loaned and/or gifted to the Province of Saskatchewan. Because of his ability to speak the Cree and Saulteaux languages, and due to his ongoing friendships with local Native people throughout the region, J.Z. was able to acquire previously unknown insights into historical events from the Indigenous perspective. He interviewed local First Nations and Métis Elders, and developed a detailed knowledge of historical sites and events, primarily those of the Qu'Appelle Valley. He shared this information in a wide range of articles that were published in local Saskatchewan newspapers, magazines, and provincial histories. As mentioned previously, J.Z.'s political connections led to administrative postings with the government, particularly as a peace officer and as a fish and wildlife officer. His background as a wildlife officer no doubt encouraged his interest in the animal, fish, and bird populations of the area, and his papers contain a number of handwritten essays on conservation.²⁴

Joseph Z. LaRocque died in 1964, aged eighty-five. His collected correspondence and historical writings remained in the possession of his son Robert James "Jimmy" LaRocque until the latter's death in 2009. Since 2012, I have had the opportunity to work with Joseph LaRocque's papers, and his writings display many of the strengths (and alleged weaknesses) of vernacular historical writing. But first, some additional context on my involvement with this collection is required.

The J.Z. LaRocque papers: The legacy of a Métis Liberal

In the 1990s I paid my first visit to Lebret, Saskatchewan, in the Qu'Appelle Valley with my cousin Art. We visited our ancestors in the graveyard, went to the local museum, and later stopped by the home of Jimmy and Lucy LaRocque, long-time residents of Lebret. Jimmy, considered to be the

unofficial historian of the community, was actually the inheritor of this mantle from his father, the late J.Z. LaRocque.

My personal relationship with Lebret and the LaRocque family in particular is through my mother (our Desjarlais and Klyne ancestors are from this community and buried in the local cemetery). As a young woman she also worked at Fort San (also known as the Fort Qu'Appelle Sanatorium), the tuberculosis hospital not far from Lebret. One of her friends and co-workers at the sanatorium later married J.Z.'s son Jimmy and settled at Lebret.

My first 1990s visit with the LaRocques was brief but interesting. Jimmy showed us samples of kinnikinnik, told us humorous anecdotes about our relations, and chatted about family history, community history, and his father's large collection of historical accounts.

As the years passed and I became caught up in my own Métis research projects, J.Z. LaRocque and the documents he had left behind faded from view. The existence of J.Z. LaRocque's papers was known among local historians and community members in the Qu'Appelle Valley, but the papers had never been studied outside of the family. It was well known that his son Jimmy was fiercely protective of his father's legacy, and that it was his intention to "do something" with the collected papers.

In the intervening years, my parents visited the LaRocques from time to time, as my mother was an old friend of Jimmy's wife Lucy. Then in spring 2009 I heard from my mother that Jimmy had died at the age of eighty-seven. She sent me the mass card from Jimmy's funeral, and I posted it on my bulletin board, where I often stared at it, and wondered about his papers.

Shortly after Jimmy LaRocque's passing, I asked my mother if she still stayed in touch with Lucy. She said yes. Then I asked her if she would phone Lucy and ask her about Jimmy's papers, to find out if the papers still existed. She phoned Lucy, and then she called me back to affirm that, indeed, Lucy still had the papers, and that they were in boxes and trunks. I then requested that she phone Lucy again, to ask her if I could examine the papers. And again, my mother phoned back to tell me that "Yes, Lucy says you can look at the papers, but she can't pay you to do it!" This puzzled me, as I couldn't understand why she would think that I wanted payment for looking at the collection, but I told Mom to phone her back to advise her that I wanted NO money, just the chance to look at the documents.



3.2 Mrs. Lucy LaRocque (left) and my mother, Mrs. Mary Devine (right). Photo by author.

My request to examine the collection was granted by Mrs. LaRocque via my mother. We decided to make the journey a mother-daughter “road trip” of sorts – Mom would visit with Lucy, and I would look at the documents.

My mother and I flew to Saskatchewan from Alberta in late August 2010, travelling by car to Lebret, where the papers were stored. While my mother and Lucy visited, I conducted a preliminary analysis of the contents of the boxes and trunks where the papers were housed, and asked permission to borrow part of the collection for further study.

Permission was granted by Mrs. LaRocque, and I set aside a total of four boxes of correspondence and other material (approximately six linear feet), for pickup by car at a future date. My mother and I returned to Alberta, and I completed a formal ethics application for my research project, as well as an informed consent form for Mrs. LaRocque’s review and signature. The draft documents were reviewed and approved by Research Ethics, and in early September of 2010 my husband and I drove to Lebret, Saskatchewan.



3.3 LaRocque's trunk of documents. Photo by author.

Mrs. LaRocque signed two copies of the informed consent form, keeping one copy for herself. My husband and I then returned to Alberta with the LaRocque collection and the signed consent form, which completed the initial task of this project – the acquisition of the papers for study.

In early 2011 I hired a doctoral student to go through the collection, in order to document and sort the papers according to archival principles. This was deemed necessary, as the collection was in no discernible order, and it would be very difficult to review the documents chronologically or thematically without some form of preliminary arrangement.

The preliminary documentation and arrangement of the collection was completed by April 2011, and a rudimentary finding aid was prepared for the papers.

Originally my interest in the documents was strictly for the transcribed oral accounts of Métis history that J.Z. LaRocque was known to have collected from Métis Elders in the Qu'Appelle Valley of Saskatchewan. He had



3.4 LaRocque's Bundled Letter File. Photo by author.

a wide-ranging circle of friends and acquaintances among old-timers of every race, ethnicity, and political stripe.

What surprised me most, however, was a collection of documents that had been set aside by someone (probably Jimmy) prior to any outsiders looking at the collection. The file consisted of correspondence between J.Z. LaRocque and J.G. "Jimmy" Gardiner, a Lemberg, Saskatchewan, school-teacher and farmer who became premier of Saskatchewan in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and then became federal minister of agriculture in the Liberal government of Mackenzie King. The number and variety of letters were astonishing. While there were handwritten drafts and typed carbon copies of letters that J.Z. had mailed to Jimmy, there were also *responses* to J.Z.'s letters from Jimmy Gardiner, typewritten on various government letterheads that served as visual "signposts" of Gardiner's political career over the decades. Another pleasant discovery was political correspondence between LaRocque and other Saskatchewan politicians, among them Métis and First Nations activists.

Lebret, Sask.
June 24, 1939.

Hon. W. J. Patterson,
Premier,
REGINA.

Dear Mr. Patterson;

With further reference to Metis rights to landed properties in Saskatchewan, I found about 90% of them disposed of their holdings thru out the province. Those born in Saskatchewan between 1870 to 1885, including myself, received 240 acres as scrips and also had the privilege of entering an ordinary "homestead" of 160 acres. A great number took advantage of the second privilege, and again disposed of it, in most cases, as soon as they "proved up" the lands. There is only, practically speaking, the LaRoque boys owing farm lands in this district, and thanks for this to the late Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

When Dad settled here in 1876, he bought out old squatters' rights from the following Metis men; Augustin Brabant, St. Pierre Poitras, and Michael Desjarlais. The Book entitled "The Company of Adventurers" written by Isaac Cowie mentions my father, on page 411, quote; "Antoine LaRoque, a considerable trader, arrived from Red River" He next father arrived at a spot where now Fort Qu'Appelle is located. This was in 1870, and apparently he had spent much of his time in the regions of Edmonton, and Lac la Piche from 1870 to 1876 when he was persecuted by the late Father Hugonard to settle in the Qu'Appelle Valley. Originally my father intended to return to the Red River, and send us boys to St. Boniface College.

When my father arrived here in 1876 Father Hugonard had already here here (Lebret) 2 years coming from Grenoble, a province South of France. My father was bent having his sons educated and Father Hugonard promised him a school right here. The good Father Hugonard kept his promise and opened a day school for the Metis children shortly after.

My father had acquired 3 sections of land in this district, and after the survey about 1880-1 he became the proud possessor of these properties in a legal way. However, misfortune overtook the LaRoque family in 1885. He could not read or write and to this date, I cannot figure out how he kept his accounts when he carried on such a large business. He usually had 75 Red River carts heavy loaded with merchandise, and apparently he advanced goods to trappers and buffalo hunters thru out the length and breadth of this country.

When hostilities broke out in 1885 he kept strictly neutral although he would naturally sympathise with Louis Riel. Star Blanket and the other minor Chiefs from File Hills Reservations wanted to go on the war path but wanted the open support of Antoine LaRoque. LaRoque was reputed to have considerable quantities of ammunition, consisting of gun powder and bullets. Star Blanket's plans were to kill Father Hugonard, one George Fisher, a trader, and Archibald McDonald.

3.5 A LaRoque's typewritten letter. Photo by author.

After a cursory examination of secondary historical sources dealing with Saskatchewan politics revealed no references to J.Z. LaRocque, I began making inquiries of colleagues at the University of Regina. I found, to my surprise, that local scholars who specialized in Saskatchewan political history were *unaware* of the long-standing friendship between the Métis politician and the Liberal leader. Moreover, my examination of the finding aid for the massive J.G. Gardiner fonds held by the Saskatchewan Archives revealed only *one* letter from J.Z. LaRocque to Jimmy Gardiner, written in the 1960s.²⁵

While I found these political papers fascinating, I was also intrigued by the very large collection of published reminiscences and newspaper articles, and published “letters to the editor” that Mr. LaRocque had produced during his lifetime. Many of these writings documented key events from the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, as experienced by members of his family and other Métis and First Nations residents of the Qu’Appelle Valley. These written reminiscences are of particular importance. First of all, they provide additional information about specific events during the rebellion that do not appear in conventional accounts of the event. These accounts also embody many of the characteristics of vernacular histories, as discussed previously. The remainder of this examination will focus on a selection of J.Z. LaRocque’s vernacular accounts of his family’s experiences during the Northwest Rebellion of 1885, highlighting the unique characteristics of these documents that are not normally featured in conventional historical narratives.

The arrest of Antoine LaRocque – 1885

Antoine LaRocque, the father of J.Z. LaRocque, was a trader from St. François Xavier Parish, Red River. Like many Métis families who migrated out of the Red River Settlement after the Red River resistance of 1869–70, Antoine LaRocque and his wife Rosalie LaPlante moved westward with their children to the newly created District of Assiniboia to farm. They settled near the village of Lac Qu’Appelle, now known as Lebret, in 1875, where they operated a large farm raising cattle and horses.

Unfortunately, the Northwest Rebellion of 1885 would have disastrous consequences for the family. Antoine LaRocque was falsely accused

of supplying firearms to rebels, and was arrested and jailed, despite the family's claims that Antoine LaRocque had actually persuaded local First Nations groups *not* to participate in the conflict. LaRocque was encouraged to sue the government for wrongful arrest, and proceeded to hire legal assistance to initiate a lawsuit. Unfortunately, Antoine LaRocque eventually ran out of money to pay his lawyer. To cover his legal debts, his lands were taken from him.

One version of this story is contained in a letter sent to the Hon. W.J. Patterson, Liberal premier of Saskatchewan, by J.Z. LaRocque in June 1939. Although this account is not the earliest telling of the tale, it is significant because Joseph LaRocque is using the story to illustrate some of the circumstances whereby various Saskatchewan Métis lost their lands. It is also relatively complete, in that it provides some contextual family information and also identifies the key individuals and events involved in his father's arrest and subsequent bankruptcy.

Dear Mr. Patterson:

With further reference to Metis rights to landed properties in Saskatchewan, I found about 90% of them disposed of their holdings thro out the province. Those born in Saskatchewan between 1870 to 1885, including myself, received 240 acres as scrips and also had the privilege of entering an ordinary 'homestead' of 160 acres. A great many took advantage of the second privilege, and again disposed of it, in most cases, as soon as they 'proved up' the lands. There is only, practically speaking, the La Rocque boys owning farm lands in this district, and thanks for this to the late Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier....

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When hostilities broke out in 1885 he kept strictly netral [*sic*] although he would naturally sympathize with Louis Riel. Star Blanket and the other minor Chiefs from File Hills Reservations wanted to go on the war path but wanted the open support of Antoine LaRocque. LaRocque was reputed to have considerable quantities of ammunicions, consisting of gun powder and bullets. Star Blanket's plans were to kill Father Hugonard, one George Fisher, a trader, and Archibald McDonald, then Chief Factor, Hudson's Bay Company, Fort Qu'Appelle. Star Blanket accused these three men for betraying the Indians and Métis and he was bound to take revenge on them but wanted LaRocque's support to do it. My father always told us, he knew the Indian character too well, and he would not advise them to commit any rash act...

Star Blanket decided to move towards the Qu'Appelle Valley in the spring of 1885 and dug trenches on the top of the hills about one mile East where the cross is planted opposite Lebret. This was verified by Chief Buffalo Bow, 99 years old, when you was [*sic*] made Ka-Nee-Kan Otaeu at File Hills 1st July 1937. Most likely the authorities found out Star Blanket was making frequent visits to LaRocque and its an open secret to all old timers that LaRocque was an easy victim to unscrupulous would be 'spies' during the rebellion.

He stood solid to his grounds, prevented Star Blanket going on the war path, yet, he would not betray his own people. Finally the sad moment came, one night during the rebellion Col. O'Brien, Toronto, with 200 armed men went to LaRocque's trading post (where my dairy farm is now located) and arrested him. LaRocque had a revolver and he was going to use it. Mother intervened and pleaded with him to give in as otherwise, I would not be writing this 54 years after. Dad was a massive

built man, standing around 6 feet weighing about 250 pounds. A general melee might have been the sad result as the soldiers would have been ordered to shoot, and being night time, astray bullets might have killed the innocent as well as the combatants.

The soldiers escorted him to Regina and kept him in Jail for 9 days on bread and water. Apparently unable to find any evidence against him, he was released. Dad told us he had to sleep on the bare floor. After his release again the dark clouds of misfortune befell on the family. A man named T. W. Jackson, I believe a lawyer, persuaded Dad to sue the Canadian Government for false arrest. I am not sure but I think Mr. Jackson was connected with the North West Council. He extracted all the cash he could from him and likely the Crown kept on asking remands. The point came when LaRocque had no more money and in default of appearing, a judgement was registered against him for the costs. Failing to pay these costs the Crown seized all his lands. Then homeless, friendless, the LaRocque family had to eke out a living the best they knew how. Necessarily we were classed as 'rebels' and looked down on as undesirables. To intensify the groans of persecution my father died in January 1894.

In 1895 the dark clouds that had been hovering over our confiscated home took a change and gradually turned silvery. The Right Hon. Sir Wilfrid Laurier then touring the West came to Leuret and attended Mass on a Sunday. I was then 14 years old and I will remember seeing the silver tongue orator kneeling at the altar railing in the little old [church] here. After Mass the distinguished visitor spoke. He made a solemn promise that if elected, he would grant full amnesty to all those that had had any misunderstandings with the Canadian Government. My late brother Alexander LaRocque, who was the eldest in the family, told Sir Wilfrid of our home being confiscated thro the arrest of our father. Sir Wilfrid took notes and not many months after his election as Prime Minister of Canada, we received a registered letter containing a clearance of our lands, and mother wept with joy and needless to say, our family always held Sir Wilfrid with the greatest of admiration....

‘The last but not least’ Since narrating all our misfortunes, we were reduced to down right poverty and in 1899 again Sir Wilfrid came to the rescue. As I was telling you when in your office recently, how I came to be a Liberal, this is how it happened. I was one of those entitled to a land scrip in 1899 and I kept mine for one year, and sold it for \$300.00. With this money I took a commercial course in Winnipeg.

Yours sincerely,
Jos. Z. LaRocque²⁶

J.Z.’s account of the family’s fall in fortune, followed by their redemption in 1895 at the hands of Liberal Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, has been told and retold over the decades – in public speeches, in newspaper articles, and in the private correspondence of J.Z. LaRocque. This story, as I have come to learn, is pivotal to understanding the roots of Liberal Party loyalty in the LaRocque family. It also helps to explain the unusual, even incongruous, presence of a Métis political organizer in a mainstream political party prior to World War I.

However, the earliest published account of the LaRocque family experience may, in fact, be Star Blanket’s account of the Northwest Rebellion. Star Blanket (*Ahchacoosahcotatakoopit*) was a hereditary chief and the son of Chief White Buffalo Calf (*Wahpiimoosetoosis*), a signatory of Treaty 4. Several published biographies of Star Blanket currently exist, and his resistance to federal government policies has been well documented.²⁷ The reminiscence below is featured in Volume 1 of John Hawkes, *The Story of Saskatchewan and Its People*.²⁸ Oddly enough, this account is not contained in the section of this book devoted to discussing the rebellion. Instead, it is contained in Chapter 15: “An Indian Murder Case.” A few pages into this chapter is an introductory paragraph entitled “Star Blanket,” written by John Hawkes:

Star Blanket was an immovable Pagan of strong character, and there is little doubt that the old warrior was positively aching to go on the war path in the rebellion. We have seen an entirely imaginative account in print setting forth that Father Hugonard actually choked him into submission, threw such a scare

into him that he was afraid to join the rebels. The truth will be found in the following statement which was given me at an arranged meeting with Star Blanket in the Qu'Appelle at Mr. Joseph La Roque's [*sic*] house. Many French Metis were placed in an invidious position in the rebellion and some suggestions were at one time made against the loyalty of the well-known family of La Roque. The subjoined statement will put the late Mr. LaRoque in his true light and show that not only was he loyal but that to him and to him alone Star Blanket's neutrality in the rebellion was due.²⁹

This introduction is followed by a passage entitled "Star Blanket's Statement," which would appear to be a detailed transcript of his dealings with Antoine LaRocque, as featured in the excerpt below:

Myself, Kee-was-stoo-tin and Is-koo-ches, went to LaRoque's, all dressed up in warrior style, and upon [my] entering his home he asked me, 'How are you brother? What's wrong?' I said, 'Nothing, brother: I am looking for peace, then if I cannot find it what shall I do?' He replied, 'Brother, go to the soldier's camp at Kee-pa-hee-kan-nik, and you show yourself that you are not looking for trouble by shaking hands with them. Bring no guns with you, and I guarantee they won't hurt you. Go straight to the camp and the sentry may not allow you to enter the camp grounds, and may offer to scare you with a gun, but never heed, just go by him and salute him by "How." 'Thereby I followed my brother's advice and went to the camp at the Fort (Qu'Appelle) with my two companions, and did exactly what brother (La Roque) told me to do... The C.O. asked me what I wanted. I told him I was on a peace pilgrimage and would acknowledge the Government's good will and peace by exchanging tobacco and tea. A man named McKay, a half-breed, was interpreter. The C.O. was in a happy mood when he heard this and immediately gave orders that I be given these commodities. They gave us tobacco and tea in large quantities. Then we again shook hands and we left the soldier's camp for our camp in Lebret. I must say that I was determined to have my brother's advice (La Roque's)



3.6 Ahchacoosahcotatakoopit (Star Blanket). Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

whether right or wrong, which of course I intended to carry out in the extreme. But give honour to my deceased brother's (La Roque's) wise advice. If he had advised me the contrary God alone knows what might have happened, as I had a powerful band of warriors. My brother (La Roque) always advised me to avoid doing wrong, and that the Lord would give me luck. Then on my return to the camp I went again to see my brother (La Roque) and told him the results of my trip. He was glad to hear it, and again he told me not to take up arms, and to lead a peaceful life.³⁰

The statement (which is not provided in its entirety here) ends with "This is a true statement and I give my cross thereto." Star Blanket's "X" is at the bottom of the passage, along with the words "Witness Joseph Z. La Roque."

While reviewing other documents in the J.Z. LaRocque Papers, I encountered additional contextual information about the Star Blanket narrative. In a typed essay entitled "Thoughts, Fancies, and Facts," J.Z. LaRocque reminisces about a chance encounter with an individual directly involved in his father's arrest.

Apparently odd things will happen in a life time. When I was a Field Officer for the Department of Natural Resources, I was up good and early one morning and proceeded to the Sioux Bridge in the Qu'Appelle Valley to check duck hunters. There were several Regina sportsmen there. I will mention a few[:] Sir Frederick Haultain, his brother Wilmot, former Chief Justice W.W. Martin, his late brother Dr. Martin and some prominent men from the surrounding country. The last man I checked was William Charles Maguire of 1928 McIntyre St. Regina. He told me he had come to Winnipeg in 1882 and was a cavalryman in the Riel Rebellion. That he had been an employee of the Massey-Harris Company for nearly fifty years.

He asked me when I came West and I told him I was always in Saskatchewan, born on the valley flats at Lebret. He went on describing when Col. O'Brien of Toronto during one night, picked 200 strong men, including himself, to go on patrol to Lebret, then known as "La Mission Qu'Appelle" to arrest

Antoine LaRocque. They arrived there from Fort Qu'Appelle and pushed a gun in every window. Col. O'Brien with other officers and an interpreter went in and arrested my father. My mother told me when I became age of reason, that father had a revolver under his pillow and he was going to shoot but mother pleaded with him not to ... I asked Mr. Maguire if he didn't see a cradle [*sic*], as may be no officer would be checking him this morning. He seemed a nice man and jokingly I told him, it was my turn to use the law on him.

At the same time the formidable Cree Chief Star Blanket of File Hills Reserve, was also arrested and he and LaRocque were incarcerated for nine days in the Regina guard room but for lack of evidence for seditious acts both were liberated without trial.

In the Mary Weekes' Book, entitled "The Last Buffalo Hunter" on page 185 are published pure fabrication about Antoine LaRocque, that Norbert Welsh had lent money to LaRocque to pay a fine over the 1885 rebellion. It's a pity [*sic*] for such a well known author as Mary Weekes is, didn't make searches in the R.C.M.P. records and find out the truth, and avoid printing erroneous statements against a dead man. This same man Norbert Welsh makes derogatory remarks against the character of Antoine LaRocque in pages 112-13 and the falsehoods he had printed against this man on page 185, what he says about him in pages 112-3 must also be falsehood.

However, in about 1915, Norbert Welsh was guest at my house where the arrest was made in 1885, along with Chief Star Blanket, and my brother John LaRocque, both of whom had been official interpreters for the Indian Department, and thoroughly understood the Cree language. We also had another guest the late Mr. John Hawkes, author and Saskatchewan Legistive [*sic*] Librarian. Mr. Hawkes thro these interpreters, point blank, asked Chief Star Blank [*sic*], who persuaded him not to go on the war path in 1885: He replied: "My brother 'Chie-ca-nay' the Cree name of my father, meaning "Humming bird". Now why didn't Norbert Welsh deny the Chief as in Mary Weekes' book, he claims he persuaded him not to go on the war path. Not forgetting to mention we all had liquid refreshments

but the Chief refused to take any. Also my good wife served a tasty meal to the remarkable gathering. Mr. Hawkes took several notes, and included them in his Book “People I have Met”. The Late John Hawkes’ Books can be found in the Regina Public Library.³¹

There are intriguing elements in the account above that embody several of the diagnostic characteristics of vernacular history as discussed by Lyle Dick. Perhaps the most obvious characteristic of this story is that it is written largely in the first person – a literary convention that is typically frowned upon by most historians because it does not reflect the “scholarly detachment” that provides an aura of credibility to historical writing. J.Z. LaRocque the narrator is *not* removed from the account; instead, he is featured as a direct participant in the story – first as the wildlife officer meeting William Charles Maguire, and later as the baby in the crib during his account of his father’s arrest by Col. O’Brien’s men. It is also quite clear that the author demonstrates what professional historians might consider an unseemly, even “passionate involvement” with his subject of study, to paraphrase the words of Lyle Dick. There are numerous folksy asides in the account, as well as direct criticisms of another community member from Leuret, and the professional writer who previously published a book containing that person’s inaccurate statements about the LaRocque family. As a rule, most writers (and their publishers) are careful to avoid such statements, particularly if they are discussing living people, as these remarks could be considered libellous if published. Professional historians by definition generally confine themselves to discussing events of the distant past where the parties are usually deceased. But vernacular historians, who are recounting their own eyewitness experiences (or those of a family or community member), do not consider their writing from a legal point of view. It is *their* truth, as they understand it to be.

However, there is some effort on the part of J.Z. LaRocque to provide corroborating evidence for the statements in his accounts, by his listing of other individuals who could be consulted to verify the presented facts. Indeed, the process of establishing the veracity of Antoine LaRocque’s experiences during his arrest began, first of all, with having Chief Star Blanket provide his own eyewitness testimony of both his and Antoine LaRocque’s arrest by the authorities. Moreover, John Hawkes’s actual presence



3.7 John Hawkes,
Saskatchewan
Legislative Librarian.
Provincial Archives of
Saskatchewan.

in J.Z. LaRocque's home to witness Star Blanket's deposition was, in itself, a method of substantiating the validity of the eyewitness evidence provided by Star Blanket, in accordance with Indigenous protocols for establishing the veracity of evidence. Archivist Mary Ann Pylypchuk has argued:

The formalized telling of oral histories, the display of artifacts, singing of songs, and the staging of ceremonies in the presence of others is considered a form of evidence and establishes the legitimacy of evidence. It also establishes its spiritual power.³²

The subsequent publication of the account in *The Story of Saskatchewan and Its People* was a further step toward establishing the veracity of the information in a "fixed," that is, published format. It is surprising that this revisionist account was featured in a provincial history at all, since it was only forty years since the end of the Northwest Rebellion, and emotions regarding the event still ran high in Saskatchewan and elsewhere. However,

J.Z. LaRocque was a staunch Liberal and one of the early members of the party in Saskatchewan. John Hawkes, the author of *The Story of Saskatchewan and Its People*, was the legislative librarian in the Liberal government of Charles Avery Dunning during the period 1922–26. Star Blanket’s story was possibly included as a personal favour to Joseph LaRocque, though it should be noted once again that the account is not featured prominently in the part of the collection devoted to the Northwest Rebellion.

A third version of this story was published as an illustrated article in *Liberty* magazine in 1955, during the fiftieth anniversary of Saskatchewan’s creation as a province.³³ This particular iteration of the account, entitled “I Saw Saskatchewan’s Bloody Rebellion,” amply illustrates yet another characteristic of vernacular writing, that being the tendency of a vernacular account to change over time according to the nature of the audience, and the chronological and situational context of the story’s presentation.

In this telling of the tale, which features the byline “A *Liberty* Salute on Sask.’s 50th Birthday,” LaRocque begins the account with a brief introduction to the topic of the Northwest Rebellion and his father’s arrest. Then he introduces himself to the reader with a prologue that establishes the contemporary context for the publication of the article.

This year, the province celebrates its Golden Jubilee. It will be 50 and I’ll be 74. I’m Joseph Zephrian [*sic*] La Rocque, a Saskatchewan half-breed. I was a year old before the tent city of Regina was born. And I was 24 when Sir Wilfrid Laurier came to Regina to give Canada a new province. I’m happy to have grown up with Saskatchewan.

To celebrate its birthday, a Jubilee Pageant, Passion Play, parades, art exhibitions, folk dances and sport programs will be held this year. One feature, on September 4, will be the re-enacting of the inauguration ceremonies over which Canadian prime minister Laurier presided. Five of Saskatchewan’s seven premiers will attend the ceremony for the province which, though rich in agricultural produce, is now second only to Alberta in oil production.

With a population of nearly 900,000, my Saskatchewan has, in five years, increased its spending on the search for oil from \$2,000,000 to \$60 million. Some three-quarters of my province

is covered in timber; it has, in fact, more untouched forestland than any province east of British Columbia.

The University of Saskatchewan boasts the country's second largest – Chalk River, Ont. Is the biggest – atomic research center. And the first cobalt bomb, for cancer treatment, was built at the university.³⁴

Following this rather boosterish description of modern-day Saskatchewan, LaRocque proceeds with the retelling of his story. In this 1950s account, he repeats virtually all of the salient details contained in the previous iterations, but there are cosmetic additions to the story, no doubt suggested by the co-author identified in the first page of the article, Robert Tyre, a journalist and former public relations specialist in the office of CCF Premier Tommy Douglas.³⁵ In this version, there are scenic descriptions that may or may not be actual memories, but provide colour and immediacy to the story. And there are a few additional details that are new and unique, such as the following anecdote:

When Laurier came to Regina to help launch the new Province, I attended the ceremony. The big day was September 4, 1905.

I joined the solid mass of humanity that overflowed from Victoria Park. When Sir Wilfrid read the proclamation that made Saskatchewan a province, I forced my way through the crowd to him.

I reached for his hand and shook it mightily, saying, "The LaRocques thank you very much, sir."³⁶

This final (?) telling of the LaRocque family's experiences in 1885 is the most "literary" version of the various accounts that exist. The plot elements – the introduction of the LaRocque family and the outbreak of the Saskatchewan rebellion (exposition); the arrest and jailing of Antoine LaRocque as a rebel (rising action); the failed lawsuit and confiscation of the family's land (rising action); the providential meeting with Wilfrid Laurier (rising action); and the restitution of the family property by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier (climax) – follow a time-tested pattern for plot development. It also provides a satisfactory "denouement" to the various versions of the LaRocque story, in that the narrator, Joseph LaRocque, has lived to

a ripe old age and had the opportunity to watch his descendants – and his province – prosper.

The conclusion of the story also serves to illustrate another, rather puzzling aspect of vernacular scholarship – that being the tendency of some vernacular writers (particularly minority writers) to internalize the cultural values of the dominant society that has sought to marginalize them.

In the 1955 *Liberty* article, LaRocque espouses his Canadian patriotism and his pride in his modern homeland while telling the story of how the Canadian government illegally incarcerated his father and the territorial government of Saskatchewan confiscated the family landholdings. Although this may seem hypocritical or even naive, it is important to remember that the dispossession and marginalization that characterized the vast majority of Indigenous experiences with Euro-Canadians were also variable in their impact. The transition of Western Canada from a frontier to a settled society was a racialized and gendered experience, to be sure. But it was also an undertaking that was influenced by class. Educated and affluent Métis had the social and economic resources to make the lifestyle adjustments essential for adapting to the new order of things. As a result, certain Métis families were able to achieve a “happy ending” for themselves – and craft it into history.

Conclusion: Vernacular history as “usable past”

Joseph LaRocque was a member of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party, a founding member of the Métis Society of Saskatchewan, and an active vernacular historian during his lifetime. For J.Z. LaRocque, preserving and sharing local history served several functions. First of all, it enabled LaRocque, on behalf of himself and his less literate Métis kin, to preserve the remaining oral accounts of local Métis history before they were forgotten. His sharing of reminiscences in public talks and local newspaper columns allowed him to supplement, and occasionally challenge, the dominant historical and sociopolitical narrative being promulgated in Western Canada – a triumphant nationalist narrative that tended to portray Indigenous people as a defeated minority doomed to poverty due to their inability to adapt to modern society. His initial step was to write alternative accounts of the Northwest Rebellion of 1885 that incorporated his own family

experiences and those of other Indigenous people, with the intention of directly challenging, and correcting, perceived inaccuracies and omissions in the “official” historical accounts of the event. His recollections, which were an entertaining mix of historical fact and community anecdote, were also intended to be didactic in tone, stressing the solid moral and community values of the Métis people as a means of challenging the anti-Native biases of some of his non-Native reading audience.³⁷

In addition to his vernacular writing, J.Z. LaRocque set out to establish a public persona as an educated, knowledgeable individual regarding Aboriginal historical and contemporary issues, which enabled him to find decent employment and achieve his own political goals within both the Métis Society of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Liberal Party. He accomplished these goals by cashing in his Métis scrip to further his formal education in Winnipeg, using his scrip money to take business training and to purchase a Remington typewriter, which he used to good effect for the rest of his life.

A third important goal was to preserve the Métis past, through his collaboration and friendship with various members of historical societies, with museum curators, and with archivists in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. He generously shared documents and artifacts with these individuals, even when organizations such as the Saskatchewan Museum betrayed his trust by not returning items they had borrowed.³⁸

Vernacular histories are an important, and little utilized, source of fresh and original historical information. These accounts, produced by non-professional historians, were often discounted by professional scholars in previous decades due to elitism, ethnocentrism (some might say racism), and a misplaced aesthetic which equated passion and connectedness to the subject matter with historical inaccuracy.

Métis-written histories, like those of other Indigenous peoples, are largely unknown and unstudied by scholars. It is time that these materials were circulated to a larger audience and incorporated into the broader historical record of the Canadian West.

Notes

- 1 I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Insight Grants Program for my research project entitled “The J.Z. LaRocque Papers: Métis History and Politics in Southern Saskatchewan, 1886–1945.” I would also like to thank the late Lucy LaRocque, and her surviving family members, for granting me permission to work with this collection of papers. Finally, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers, and Bill Waiser, for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

There is considerable debate over whether the Métis uprisings in 1869–70, and in 1885, should be called “resistances” or “rebellions.” It is currently the policy and practice of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, and many other Indigenous and non-Indigenous collectives, to call *both* conflicts “resistances.” I have chosen to refer to the 1869–70 conflict as a “resistance” and the 1885 uprising a “rebellion.” The District of Assiniboia, which incorporated most of what is commonly known as the Red River Settlement, was in a period of jurisdictional limbo during the final six months of 1869. The region finally joined Canada as the province of Manitoba in 1870 after considerable negotiations with the Métis following the resistance of local residents to the attempted transfer. As of 1882, the North-West Territories consisted of the territories of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Assiniboia, and Athabasca, which comprised most of what are now the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. At this time, Manitoba and the North-West Territories were firmly under Canadian jurisdiction. Indeed, the ability of the Canadian government to try Louis Riel for treason in 1885 was based, in part, on the fact that the North-West Territories were part of Canada. See “North-West Territories, 1870–1905,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (online), <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/north-west-territories-1870-1905/> (accessed 22 June 2016).

- 2 A massive, and growing, bibliography on Louis Riel, has accumulated over the years. For readers wanting a thematic introduction to the primary and secondary literature on Riel to 1980, see Lewis H. Thomas, “Louis Riel (1844–85),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/riels_louis_1844_85_11E.html (accessed 4 August 2016). A more recent publication which deals directly with societal perceptions of Riel (and his mental state) is Albert Braz, *The False Traitor: Louis Riel in Canadian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).
- 3 See Peter S. Li, “Visible Minorities in Canadian Society: Challenges of Racial Diversity,” in *Social Differentiation, Patterns and Processes*, ed. Danielle Juteau Lee (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 120.
- 4 After the Riel conflicts of 1885, the Canadian government revised the Indian Act to confine treaty First Nations people in Western Canada to their respective reserves via the implementation of a “pass system.” Under this system, it was illegal for a treaty Native to leave the reserve without an official pass, signed and dated by the Indian agent, that stated the person’s business off the reserve, where they were going, and when they were supposed to return. This system was in place for over sixty years.
- 5 A detailed analysis of how Métis identity has been portrayed in literature – by non-Métis and Métis alike – is provided in Darren R. Prefontaine, Lean Dorion, Patrick Young, and Sherry Farrell Racette, “Métis Identity,” at the Gabriel Dumont Institute, *The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture*, <http://www.metismuseum.ca/media/db/00726> (accessed 12 May 2015).

- 6 The phrase “respectable Métis” was a term used by nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers to describe those individuals and families who had made a successful transition to farming or business after the demise of the buffalo and fur trade economy. It became formally entrenched in government terminology during the Ewing Commission hearings of the 1930s. See Gerhard J. Ens and Joe Sawchuk, *From New Peoples to New Nations: Aspects of Métis History and Identity from the Eighteenth to Twenty-first Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 280. For a nineteenth-century example of the term in use, see Isaac Cowie, *The Company of Adventurers* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1914), 464, where he describes hosting a ball at Fort Qu’Appelle in honor of “Messrs Kavanagh and Kelly, two soldiers retired from the U.S. Army at Fort Totten, Devil’s Lake, Dakota. They had married charming daughters of a respectable Métis named Klyne.”
- 7 In fact, those Métis communities that existed in remote regions to the north and west persisted independently for a period of time after 1885. These isolated settlements continued to practice a traditional subsistence round of hunting, trapping, gathering, transport of goods, and itinerant labour despite the restrictions from federal hunting and trapping regulations for non-treaty Natives. However, the introduction of the Natural Resources Transfer Agreement in 1930, which assigned the administration of land and wildlife to provincial control, resulted in considerable hardship for those Métis who could not afford licences and were prosecuted for hunting illegally. See Nicole O’Byrne, “Challenging the Liberal Order Framework: Natural Resources and Métis Policy in Alberta and Saskatchewan (1930–1948)” (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 2014).
- 8 An excellent historiographical essay encapsulating this period of Métis scholarship is J.R. Miller’s “From Riel to the Métis,” *Canadian Historical Review* 69, no. 1 (1988): 1–20.
- 9 Of the different initiatives, perhaps the most prominent and long-lasting is the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, founded in 1980 with the goals of preserving, respecting, promoting, and enhancing Aboriginal culture. Today this multi-faceted organization continues to preserve and make available a vast quantity of historical and cultural information on its website. The institute is also heavily involved in Aboriginal teacher training, adult education, and student funding. See the Gabriel Dumont Institute, <https://gdins.org/about/overview/history/> (accessed 12 May 2015). During the same period, Nicholas Vrooman, in his role as State Folklorist of North Dakota, recorded, compiled, and annotated a selection of Plains Chippewa/Métis music on the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Reservation, which was first released by Smithsonian/Folkways Records on vinyl in 1984, and continues to be available. See Smithsonian/Folkways “Liner Notes – *Plains Chippewa/Métis Music From Turtle Mountain*” http://media.smithsonianfolkways.org/liner_notes/smithsonian_folkways/SFW40411.pdf (accessed 12 May 2015).
- 10 One Métis vernacular writer active in Alberta, for example, was Marie Rose Delorme Smith, who wrote several newspaper articles, as well as poetry, and fiction, based on her life during the early days of settlement prior to 1905. See Doris Jeanne Mackinnon, *The Identities of Marie Rose Delorme Smith: Portrait of a Métis Woman, 1861–1960* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2012).
- 11 Lyle Dick, “Vernacular Currents in Western Canadian Historiography: The Passion and Prose of Katherine Hughes, F.G. Roe, and Roy Ito,” in *The West and Beyond: New Perspectives on an Imagined Region*, ed. Alvin Finkel, Sarah Carter, and Peter Fortna (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 13–46.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 14.

- 13 Ibid., 18.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid., 15.
- 16 Ibid., 15–16.
- 17 Ibid., 15.
- 18 Lyle Dick, “Red River’s Vernacular Historians,” *Manitoba History* 71 (Winter 2013): 3.
- 19 Ibid., 5–6.
- 20 See David A. Stewart, “The First Half Century: A Sketch of the Early Years of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba.” Originally published in *Manitoba Pageant*, 24, no. 3 (Spring 1979), <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/24/firsthalfcentury.shtml> (accessed 15 May 2015).
- 21 Margaret Conrad, “A Brief Survey of Canadian Historiography,” in *New Possibilities for the Past: Shaping History Education in Canada*, ed. Penney Clark (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 33–54.
- 22 For a detailed analysis of early Canadian intellectuals and their influence, see Doug Owram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900–1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).
- 23 See J.M. Bumsted, “Trying to Describe the Buffalo: An Historiographical Essay on the Red River Settlement,” in *Thomas Scott’s Body: And Other Essays on Early Manitoba History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000), 25. See also Michel Verrette, “Trémaudan, Auguste-Henri De,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tremaudan_auguste_henri_de_15E.html (accessed 16 April 2015); and A.H. de Trémaudan, *Histoire de la Nation Métisse dans L’Ouest canadien* (Montreal: Albert Lévesque 1936), in English translation by Elizabeth Maguet, *Hold High Your Heads* (Winnipeg: Pemmi-can, 1982).
- 24 It is not known at this time whether any of these conservation essays have been published, though there are a number of copies of his historical articles in draft form and, as published newspaper clippings, in his papers. See J.Z. LaRocque Papers (hereinafter JZLP). Private collection.
- 25 Examples of primary and secondary sources examined, unsuccessfully, for information on J.Z. LaRocque’s role in the Saskatchewan Liberal Party and his friendship with James G. Gardiner include F 65 – James G. Gardiner Fonds (finding aid), Saskatchewan Archives Board, http://sab.minisisinc.com/sabmin/scripts/mwimain.dll/246/1/2/525732?RECORD&DATABASE=DESCRIPTION_WEB (accessed 28 May 2015). See also David E. Smith, *Prairie Liberalism: The Liberal Party in Saskatchewan, 1905–71* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975); David E. Smith and Norman Ward, *Jimmy Gardiner: Relentless Liberal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); and Nathaniel A. Benson, *None of It Came Easy: The Story of James Garfield Gardiner* (Toronto: Burns and MacEachern, 1955).
- 26 See J.L. LaRocque to Hon. W.J. Patterson, Premier, 24 June 1939, JZLP. The version of this letter that is presented here is edited for length, and the excerpt provided here contains the information dealing specifically with his father’s 1885 arrest. For further information on lawyer T.W. Jackson and his subsequent career, see John Palmerston

- Robertson, *A Political Manual of the Province of Manitoba and the North-west Territories* (Winnipeg: Call Printing, 1887), 109.
- 27 See “Star Blanket,” in Christian Thompson, ed., *Saskatchewan First Nations: Lives Past and Present* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2004), 125–27; and John Tobias, “AHCHUCHWAHAUHHATHOHAPIT (Ahchacoosacootacoopits, Star Blanket)” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ahchuchwahauhathohapit_14E.html (accessed 24 February 2016).
- 28 See John Hawkes, *The Story of Saskatchewan and Its People*, 3 vols. (Regina: S.J. Clarke, 1924). Copies of this account are also featured in the S.D. Hanson Fonds, University of Saskatchewan Archives, and the Indigenous Studies Portal, University of Saskatchewan, <http://portal.usask.ca/index.php?sid=538872931&id=21255&t=details> (accessed 24 February 2016).
- 29 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 163–67.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 “Thoughts, Fancies and Facts,” by J.Z. LaRocque. In D-1 (Media), JZLP.
- 32 See Mary Ann Pylpchuk, “The Value of Aboriginal Records as Legal Evidence in Canada: An Examination of Sources,” *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991): 54.
- 33 See Joseph LaRocque (as told to Robert Tyre), “I Saw Saskatchewan’s Bloody Rebellion,” *Liberty*, July 1955, 23 and 51.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 35 Robert Tyre authored a number of histories, including the biography *Douglas in Saskatchewan: The Story of a Socialist Experiment* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1962). See E. Laurie Barron, *Walking in Indian Moccasins: The Native Policies of Tommy Douglas and the CCF* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 1997), xv.
- 36 Joseph LaRocque, “I Saw Saskatchewan’s Bloody Rebellion,” 51.
- 37 LaRocque’s historical writings appeared in several Saskatchewan newspapers, including the Regina *Leader-Post*, the Melville *Advance*, the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, and the Yorkton *Enterprise*. He also gave speeches at various local and regional functions. See JZLP, Series D – Publications and/or Media Activities, Series E – Historical Activities and Contributions, and Series F-2 – Speeches.
- 38 In the J.Z. LaRocque Papers, there is a file devoted to information and correspondence related to the Saskatchewan Historical Society. This file not only documents specific artifacts and documents provided to the society by J.Z. LaRocque but also features carbon copies of correspondence from LaRocque to the society politely, but firmly, requesting the return of family artifacts provided on loan to the Saskatchewan Museum. See JZLP.

