

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

“AS SHE SHALL DEEM JUST:” TREATY 1 AND THE
ETHNIC CLEANSING OF THE ST. PETER’S RESERVE, 1871-1934

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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WINNIPEG, MANITOBA

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of
Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree**

Of

MASTER OF ARTS

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ABSTRACT

This is an overview of the history, dispossession, and fate of the “St. Peter’s Indians,” a mixed Saulteaux (Ojibwa) and Cree people who originally lived north of Winnipeg, near present-day Selkirk. Between the 1870s and 1930s the St. Peter’s Indians lost the “reserve” that had been re-affirmed as theirs under Treaty 1 (1871). The historiography typically refers to 1907 as the pivotal date of dispossession, after which the St. Peter’s Indians are assumed to have relocated to the present-day Peguis First Nation. However, sole attention to 1907 obscures two facts: 1) the people of Peguis had *already* lost as much as half their territory, and 2) the “removal” itself took a quarter-century to complete, partly due to the resistance of the Indians themselves.

The St. Peter’s “removal” was an instance of ethnic cleansing, designed to maximize land for white settlers, and minimize the number of Indians upon it. It was both a crime against humanity and a significant breach of Treaty 1, the very agreement that gives colonizers a semblance of a right to dwell in southern Manitoba. This thesis links the early and later histories of the people of Peguis, suggests a new timeline for understanding their dispossession, discusses the actual impact of forced relocation on the people, and brings to light the 1930s repatriation efforts of St. Peter’s Indians.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank Shira. Our son Asher was born just two months before I began my M.A. program. Needless to say, I could not have devoted even half the time I did over the last three and a half years, without enormous understanding, support, and compromises on her part.

I also wish to thank my supervisor, Professor R. Jarvis Brownlie, for being both supportive and critical (in the best sense of the term), letting me do my own thing, and believing in both the historical and contemporary importance of this subject. And when letting me do my own thing began to take too long? Thank you, Jarvis, for cracking the proverbial whip, and making me believe I could actually finish!

My committee members, Jean Friesen, Adele Perry, and Peter Kulchyski, went beyond the call of duty to read a lengthy final draft over the December holidays. Their expertise and suggestions have helped make the narrative stronger – though they are not, of course, responsible for its framework, arguments, and many shortcomings. Scott Macneil provided invaluable research, archival knowledge, and friendly conversation and feedback. Leah Morton helped me scan newspaper microfilms, despite having plenty of her own doctoral research to perform. Carol Adam has helped me in innumerable ways over the last three years, related to everything from transcript problems, to SSHRC applications, to navigating arcane History Department forms and procedures.

Finally, unbeknownst to her, Professor Sarah Carter deserves some indirect acknowledgement. It was through reading Carter's article on the agricultural history of St. Peter's that some of the ideas for this thesis first began to percolate. She is in no way to blame for the direction this eventually took. Thanks are also due to countless friends and acquaintances for both formal feedback and informal discussion over coffee or pints.

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Every Manitoban should be told at least one chapter in the provincial story of Aboriginal land surrenders. This case concerns the Aboriginal community situated along the Red River between Lower Fort Garry and Lake Winnipeg [St. Peter's]. ... The campaign for surrender of the reserve, led by men who wished to speculate in forthcoming land sales, was abetted by insider trading in lands by government officials, bribe payments to Indians, and a rigged vote among St. Peter's residents.

— Gerald Friesen (chapter co-written with Associate Chief Justice A.C. Hamilton and Associate Chief Judge C.M. Sinclair), *River Road* (Winnipeg, 1996).

Well, I am not trespassing because the ground is mine.

— Henry Pahkoo, Selkirk District Police Court, 1934.

I am not going. I want to die where I was born.

— Murdo Sutherland, Selkirk District Police Court, 1934.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is first of all an overview of the history, dispossession, and fate of the “St. Peter’s Indians,” a mixed Saulteaux (Ojibwa) and Cree people who originally lived on both sides of the Red River north of Winnipeg, in the vicinity of the present-day town of Selkirk. Between the 1870s and 1930s the St. Peter’s Indians gradually lost the land they had lived upon since the eighteenth century, and lost the “reserve” that had been re-affirmed as theirs under the terms of the 1871 “Stone Fort” treaty (or Treaty 1). This dispossession accelerated dramatically in 1907, in a process that I argue constitutes ethnic cleansing. But this ethnic cleansing, or what has been more antiseptically referred to as “the St. Peter’s removal” in the historical literature, took much longer to complete than hitherto appreciated, in large part because it was resisted in myriad ways by the Indians themselves. In the few cases where it is mentioned at all, the literature typically refers to the “surrender agreement” of September 1907 as the pivotal date of dispossession, after which the St. Peter’s Indians are assumed to have abandoned their reserve and relocated to the newer, more remote reserve along the Fisher River that had been allocated to them (the site of the present-day Peguis Reserve). Sole attention to the events of 1907, however, can obscure two important facts. First, the St. Peter’s Indians had *already* lost fully half their territory, as colonial interests had begun to whittle away portions of their ostensible reserve almost as soon as the ink was dry on Treaty 1. Second, the “removal” typically associated with the 1907 “surrender agreement” took a quarter-century to complete.

The events leading up to the “surrender agreement,” and details about what transpired at the infamous meeting of 23 September 1907, are fundamental to any understanding of the criminal nature of the St. Peter’s removal. Much of this crucial history has been unearthed by an unpublished legal history commissioned by the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights and Research Association of Manitoba (TARR), but the story remains largely unknown to the general public. There is no doubt that the driving force behind the destruction of the reserve and removal of its people was settler encroachment onto St. Peter’s reserve lands after Treaty 1, beginning with the founding of an illegal colony in 1875 (the Town of Selkirk). Settler ideology also played a crucial role. An endless series of commissions to investigate “conflicting claims” to private river-front lots led to a recommendation by T.G. Rothwell (Department of Interior Law Clerk) in 1900 that the reserve be dissolved outright.¹

In March 1906, a group of St. Peter’s Indians sent a petition to S.J. Jackson (Liberal MP for Selkirk) asking for white squatters to be removed from their reserve lands, in accordance with Treaty 1.² It was neither their first, nor last such appeal. However, on 22 November 1906, an Order in Council was passed to establish a Royal Commission to investigate St. Peter’s land “disputes.” The Commission was to be headed by the recently-appointed Chief Justice of the Manitoba Court of Appeal Hector Mansfield Howell.³ According to Tyler, Wright and Daniel, “there was no doubt that it [the Howell Commission] had a mandate not merely to consider, but to promote a

¹ Tyler, Wright and Daniel Limited, “The Illegal Surrender of the St. Peter’s Reserve.” Winnipeg: Treaty and Aboriginal Rights and Research (T.A.R.R.) Centre of Manitoba, 1979 and 1983, p. 96.

² Ibid., p. 211-12.

³ See the entry for H.M. Howell in J.M. Bumsted (ed.), *Dictionary of Manitoba Biography*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999, p. 114.

surrender.”⁴ Formal hearings of the Howell Commission were held between February and July 1907 to hear testimony from Indian, Métis, and white claimants. Before, during, and after this period, however, there were numerous unofficial meetings between Howell and “representatives” (real and imagined) of the St. Peter’s Indians, and in some cases, open meetings with the Band as a whole.

The first of these meetings was on 24 December 1906 attended by five men: Hector Howell, the Reverend John Semmens (Inspector of Indian Agencies for the Rat Portage and Lake Winnipeg Inspectorate since April 1905), Orange H. Clark (a Winnipeg-based lawyer and businessman who had been appointed, without the St. Peter’s Indians’ knowledge or assent, to “represent” them before the Howell Commission), Frederick Heap (a Selkirk-based lawyer and businessman appointed to represent non-Indian claimants), as well as the acting Chief of the St. Peter’s Band, William Prince. After this meeting, Prince apparently told a fellow Band Councilor that Howell was “a fine gentleman who desired for the Indians to surrender the reserve, that they might make a change to get another reserve.”⁵ In other words, *before* the first official meeting of the Royal Commission had been held to hear testimony about “conflicting claims,” Howell was advocating the complete dissolution of the St. Peter’s reserve and removal of the Indians to another location.

Between April and June of 1907, Howell presided over a series of unofficial meetings with the St. Peter’s Band as a whole, meetings which overlapped and blurred the lines between the Royal Commission hearings on the one hand, and Howell’s favoured “solution” to the St. Peter’s question on the other. It was not until 18 April

⁴ Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 228.

⁵ Councilor James Williams cited in *Ibid.*, p. 238.

1907 that many Band members heard about the proposed surrender of their reserve for the first time, but with the sole exception of Councilor W.H. Prince, every St. Peter's Band member present was vehemently opposed to the notion.⁶ Despite this near-universal opposition, Howell continued to call meetings of the Band to re-state or offer amendments to his surrender proposal. A meeting was held on 16 May 1907 (attended by Howell, Semmens, as well as James O. Lewis, Indian Agent for Clandeboye Agency since April 1905), at which Howell re-stated his proposal and hinted that the Indians "would have liberties there [at their new reserve]" that they did not have at St. Peter's, such as the freedom to sell their produce and other goods on the market without Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) interference. Howell had to have known that this new promise was a violation of the Indian Act, a remarkable "liberty" for a Chief Justice to recommend, seemingly on his own volition. Nevertheless, the St. Peter's Band, with the sole exception of Councilor W.H. Prince, remained united in their opposition to any such scheme to deprive them of their lands.⁷

On June 6, Howell called another meeting of the entire St. Peter's Band, at which he presented further revisions and inducements to try to manufacture Indian consent to a surrender. Howell had met privately with Frank Oliver (Minister of Interior and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs since April 1905) in Winnipeg in late May or early June, and his new surrender proposal appears to have been shaped by this meeting.⁸ Only a year before, Oliver had introduced a bill to amend the Indian Act in the House of

⁶ Ibid., p. 248-49. There were three different "Princes" on the Band Council at this time: William Prince (Chief), as well as W.H. Prince and John Prince. The remaining two Councilors were W.D. Harper and James Williams.

⁷ Ibid., p. 250-51.

⁸ Ibid., p. 254-57.

Commons, raising the allowable monetary inducement for securing Indian assent to reserve land surrenders from 10% to 50% of the proceeds deriving from any land sales.⁹ Significantly, Oliver's statutory amendment was reflected in Howell's new proposal to the Band on 6 June 1907, along with other new inducements. St. Peter's Indians were to receive a substantially larger reserve than hitherto suggested, a special hay reserve, guaranteed rations at treaty time, agricultural assistance (annual supplies of tools and bulls for re-stocking farms), "reasonable assistance" in transportation to the new reserve, and other promises that had not been outlined in Howell's earlier proposals. The Chief and Councilors were also promised, for the first time, far greater lands and monies than were being offered to ordinary Band members.¹⁰ Significantly, however, the assembled Band, led by the vocal ex-Chief William Asham, was still not swayed. An article in the *Manitoba Free Press* later described the Indians' response to Howell: "We will have none of your bait; we will not go ... [we were] promised that we should stay by the banks of the river as long as its water flowed."¹¹

On 7 June 1907, St. Peter's Indians had their own meeting, and flat-out refused to have further dealings with Chief Justice Howell, considering a "surrender" of their land out of the question, and the matter thus closed. According to William Asham's later testimony, the assembled Band immediately delegated W.H. Prince and Councilor James Williams "to go and tell the Chief Justice that the people of the band did not want to meet him again."¹² For most of the St. Peter's Indians, this was the last they would hear of a

⁹ Canada, *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Vol. 1: Looking Forward, Looking Back*. Ottawa: The Commission, 1996, p. 230-31.

¹⁰ Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 255-56.

¹¹ "Treaty Day on the St. Peter's Reserve," *Manitoba Free Press*, 15 June 1907, p. 31.

¹² Asham cited in Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 260.

surrender of their reserve until September 1907. They considered the matter settled. Yet Howell did not cease his efforts, he merely went underground. He held a closed meeting on July 15, inviting only W.H. Prince to “represent” the St. Peter’s Indians.¹³

Between July 15 and late-September 1907, unbeknownst to the St. Peter’s community as a whole, the Chief and Council of the Band continued to meet and communicate with Howell and other officials. On September 20, there was a pivotal meeting at the Indian Agency office in Selkirk at which the entire Band Council apparently reversed their initially-vehement opposition to the notion of a surrender. Howell, Semmens, and Lewis were all there, along with Frank Pedley (Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs), and even a reporter with the *Winnipeg Telegram*. Tyler, Wright and Daniel speculated as to the possible motivations for the Council’s dramatic reversal:

For whatever reason – the promise of \$5,000.00 cash, of \$90.00 [per Band member] from the sale, of an extension of their terms of office, or of all of these things, coupled with the other lucrative land and money provisions of the surrender proposal – the Chief and Council agreed to support the surrender.¹⁴

Whatever the reasons, most St. Peter’s Indians were not privy to them. They did not even know that negotiations were taking place after specifically directing their Council to cut off further communication with Chief Justice Howell in early June.

Three days later, on 23 September 1907, the infamous surrender meeting began. English-language notices had only been posted 24-36 hours in advance, on various churches in the Reserve, and of those St. Peter’s Indians who learned about the meeting (many were absent from the Reserve), most received less than a day’s notification. It was

¹³ Ibid., p. 263-64.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 303-05.

perhaps the most important meeting in their people's recent history, and yet advance notification was almost non-existent – a clear violation of normal Band practice, not to mention colonizer laws themselves, as outlined in the Indian Act.¹⁵ Despite the inadequate notice, however, more than two hundred St. Peter's Band members showed up. The venue, an old schoolhouse on the Reserve, was too small, and could accommodate no more than half of the people who had gathered. Unlike many of the previous meetings with Howell, the Dominion officials did not consider moving the meeting into the open air to allow everyone to hear (and breathe) more easily.¹⁶

Leading the colonizer side were Frank Pedley, John Semmens, J.O. Lewis, and Hector Howell, although other interested parties, such as O.I. Grain and S.J. Jackson (Liberal MP), as well as newspaper reporters, were also present. Pedley acted as Chair for the meeting, and opened by stating that he had come as a "friend" to defend Indian interests. He also stated that he had a satchel with \$5,000 in cash with him to divide amongst Band members then and there if they agreed to the surrender proposal, but emphasized that he would return to Ottawa with the money if they did not. William Asham, one of the few people present who was fully fluent in English, Cree and Ojibwa, refused requests to act as an interpreter for the proceedings, so that he would have a "free hand" to oppose the surrender. As a consequence, translation was handed over to W.H.

¹⁵ Indian Act legislation then in place (1906) required procedures and notification "according to the rules of the band." See Indian Act R.S.C. 1906, c.81, Section 49, in Sharon Venne (ed.), *Indian Acts and Amendments, 1868-1975: An Indexed Collection*. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, Native Law Centre, 1981, p. 192.

¹⁶ Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 307-09.

Prince and James Williams, and was regarded by many participants to be inadequate. The proceedings themselves were held in English.¹⁷

The Dominion officials had called the meeting to discuss their already-prepared surrender document, but it does not appear to have been read out to those assembled, let alone distributed in advance to the St. Peter's Band as a whole. Repeated requests by Councilor Williams to have the entire document read out, as written, and in Pedley's possession that day, were ignored.¹⁸ As he had done at prior meetings with Howell, William Asham led the opposition to the surrender proposal, and it became clear to everyone very early on that the majority of Indians present opposed the idea. Asham demanded an immediate vote, but colonial officials, backed by the Chief and Council, blocked it and adjourned the meeting – fearing, in words of the *Winnipeg Tribune*, that “the vote might be adverse.”¹⁹

By the following day something had changed. The TARR study suggested that further bribery and “the free use of whisky” were among the tactics employed by the colonial side to change some Band members' minds.²⁰ Whether and to what degree each of these influenced the proceedings is a matter of speculation. But other factors may have been more significant. The presence of large numbers of non-Treaty people – in Asham's words, “people who had no interest whatever” in St. Peter's Band decisions²¹ – and the fact that no record was kept listing who was present and voting (and whether or

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 308-312.

¹⁸ See testimony by William Asham before the Royal Commission of 1911, St. Peter's Reserve Commission (Manitoba), “St. Peter's Reserve Commission: Transcript of Evidence,” 1911, p. 95-96; Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 311.

¹⁹ “The Indians Did Not Vote,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 24 September 1907, p. 1. Also cited in Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 316-17.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 317.

²¹ St. Peter's Reserve Commission (Manitoba), 1911, p. 100.

not they were even eligible) made it almost certain that voting was skewed. Normal voting procedure for the Band prior to that day involved each eligible (adult male) member “signifying to the Indian Agent how he was voting, and with the Agent then recording the name of that band member in the appropriate column.” A clerk was normally present to register all voters’ names, status in the Band, and age, presumably to ensure that everyone present was eligible to vote according to Band stipulations and Indian Act regulations. None of these customary voting procedures was followed on that day.²²

Instead, early in the afternoon, Pedley declared that discussion was now over, and announced that it was time to vote. Rather than have people come forward in an orderly manner and record their names and votes in a ledger, Pedley announced that the vote would be taken outside, and determined by a simple division of the people present. The roughly one hundred people who could fit inside the schoolhouse began to stream outside, and join a similar sized group that had been milling about outside (and unable to actually hear the proceedings). According to William Asham, Indian Inspector Semmens had never before deigned to speak to him in Cree or Ojibwa,²³ and the surrender document itself had not been read out in its entirety in English, let alone a native language, during the entire one and a half day’s proceedings. However, as people were filing out of the building in order to vote, the Reverend Semmens yelled out loudly in Cree: *Keyawaw tattoo kakatch metatoomitanow tatopisk ka natawayimayakook, nata itska itootak* (“all you that want \$90 go to that side”), while indicating the surrender side,

²² Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 322-23.

²³ St. Peter’s Reserve Commission (Manitoba), 1911, p. 101.

where the Chief and Council were already standing.²⁴ It is important to note that even Chief William Prince, who supported the surrender, remembered Semmens' intervention this same way, including his exact words. Prince also testified that "that is what caused the surrender to carry; the people were poor and they were promised ninety dollars each head."²⁵

One can question Prince's interpretation that "the people were poor." Evidence suggests, in fact, the opposite. The people of St. Peter's were relatively prosperous in the years immediately prior to the 1907 surrender, a matter that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4. However, \$90 was nevertheless a significant sum of money at that time, representing anywhere from three week's income, to possibly half a year's income. As such, it could very well have influenced people who were *not* poor or vulnerable. It is also important to emphasize that many eligible St. Peter's voters had not even heard about the meeting, half of those gathered had not heard any of the proceedings, most people did not speak fluent English, and many of those present may not have been eligible to vote at all. Semmens himself counted the vote by scribbling down numbers in a notepad, while more than two hundred people were milling and moving about.²⁶ He was hardly a disinterested referee. In fact, there were no scrutineers to ensure that the vote was fair, and to verify that non-St. Peter's Indians, under-aged Band members, and even white settlers were not counted.

²⁴ St. Peter's Reserve Commission (Manitoba), 1911, p. 101; Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 324; George Van Der Goes Ladd, *Shall We Gather at the River?* Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1986.

²⁵ St. Peter's Reserve Commission (Manitoba), 1911, p. 41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101-03.

When Frank Pedley announced the results, and stated that 107 voted for the surrender and only 98 opposed it, William Asham was shocked. He testified later that “I was very much astonished,” so certain was he that – even with the open manipulations and bribery – the opponents of the surrender constituted a majority that day.²⁷ However, there was no way to verify or re-count the vote, because normal voting procedures had been ignored, no written record existed, and colonial officials – who had set out to dissolve the reserve in the first place – were the sole arbiters. Not surprisingly, these “arbiters” immediately declared the surrender carried, and from then on, treated it as a *fait accompli*.

Most of the St. Peter’s Indians did not move after 1907, and were in fact encouraged in their refusal by a 1911 Provincial Royal Commission which declared the 1907 “surrender” to be both “invalid” and “void.”²⁸ Local settlers, business interests, and land buyers were unfazed by the commission’s findings, however, and their incessant petitions, lobbying, and “citizen” delegations to Winnipeg and Ottawa quickly turned the “final settlement” of the St. Peter’s question into a bi-partisan (Liberal and Conservative) commitment. Federal legislation was enacted in 1916 that did not override the 1911 commission, so much as pretend it never existed. The Conservative Party that had not long before condemned the 1907 surrender as corrupt and unjust (while in opposition), now confirmed the titles of land buyers (once the Tories assumed power), in an effort to force those Indians who had refused to move from their homeland to go to the new

²⁷ Asham cited in *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁸ Transcripts of evidence and testimony for the 1911 St. Peter’s Reserve Commission are held at the Manitoba Legislative Library, along with copies of associated submissions and exhibits, and a copy of the summary of the majority and minority findings that was originally published in the 5 January 1912 issue of the *Winnipeg Telegram*.

reserve.²⁹ And still many did not move. As late as 1919 Indian Affairs officials were noting that more than half of the St. Peter's Band remained at the old reserve.³⁰ The few sources that actually acknowledge that there was a forced relocation fail to convey that it was an uneven process lasting the better part of three decades *after* 1907. These sources do not tell us, for example, that an organized repatriation movement arose in the early 1930s, in defiance of Indian Affairs and colonial authorities, nor do they suggest that twenty-five years after they ostensibly voted to surrender their reserve many St. Peter's Indians preferred to go to jail than give up the land of their ancestors.³¹

The St. Peter's Indians were arguably the Hudson's Bay Company's, and by extension the British Crown's, oldest and most steadfast indigenous allies in the Red River valley. For most of the nineteenth-century the people were led and held together by the charismatic and influential Saulteaux Chief Peguis, a figure who has gone down in the history books as "a noble friend" of settler society.³² In fact, no other Aboriginal leader appears more frequently, or more favourably, in the standard histories of both the early Red River settlement and the Province of Manitoba. As will become clear, however, this *relative* attention and favour does not tell us much, and reveals even less about the literal and figurative descendants of Peguis, given an historiographical and

²⁹ St. Peter's Reserve Act, S.C. 1916, c. 24.

³⁰ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1919, p. 18-19.

³¹ Provincial Archive of Manitoba (PAM), MG4 D5, "Evidence & Proceedings of Prosecutions of Indians for trespass on Old St. Peter's Reserve," 1934.

³² See Donna G. Sutherland, *Peguis: A Noble Friend*. St. Andrew's, Manitoba: Chief Peguis Heritage Park Inc., 2003; Bumsted, *Dictionary of Manitoba Biography*, p. 197. Also, Nan Shipley, "Peguis – Friend of the Pale Face," *Manitoba Pageant*, September 1956.

colonial tendency to marginalize native peoples, minimize their contributions, and define “good” and “bad” Indians on the basis of receptivity to colonizer interests.

By any standards, Chief Peguis and his people have been central players in the history of Red River as a region, and in the early history of Winnipeg and Manitoba. This is true whether we are talking about their role as agricultural pioneers in their own right, their pivotal friendship and aid to the early Selkirk settlers after 1812, or their decision to ally themselves to the HBC and Britain – an alliance that had regional significance from the earliest days of the Selkirk settlement, but also made itself felt in small ripples as far away in time and place as late-nineteenth century Egypt and two world wars in Europe.³³ Had Peguis and the Saulteaux allied themselves with the Métis of Cuthbert Grant, or later Louis Riel, instead of the HBC and British colonial interests, the history of the region would have been fundamentally different. Furthermore, the St. Peter’s Indians played a central role in the treaties of 1817 and 1871, which were the earliest formal negotiations on the prairies between Europeans and native peoples over how to share the land. These treaties were, among other things, pre-requisites for the growth and stability of European settler-colonialism in the Canadian west. Finally, the St. Peter’s Indians were critical participants and contributors to the economic development of the region, both in terms of their early involvement as traders in the mis-named “fur trade,” and later as independent producers or wage-labourers in diverse

³³ Chief William Prince led a contingent of Manitoba Indians on a British imperial campaign in Egypt in 1884-85. See Sarah Carter, “St. Peter’s and the Interpretation of the Agriculture of Manitoba’s Aboriginal People,” *Manitoba History* No. 18 (Autumn 1989). During World War I, despite the fact that the St. Peter’s Band was demoralized over the ongoing attack on their collective rights to the land of their ancestors, almost one-quarter of all adult males from the St. Peter’s Band (from both the new and old reserves) enlisted in the army. Canada, Indian Affairs Annual Report, 1919, p. 18-19.

industries such as freighting and steamboats, fishing and hunting, agriculture, stock-raising, berry and sugar harvesting, railways, and logging and lumber mills.

One would be hard-pressed, however, to even *know about* this centrality of Peguis and the St. Peter's Indians to the history of Red River and the Canadian west from a survey of the Canadian historiography. Indeed, growing up in Winnipeg in an indifferent settler society one is hard-pressed to know, or care that there had *ever* been a formal reserve just north of Winnipeg throughout the first forty-five years of Manitoba's history as a Province – let alone one that had such a vibrant, highly-educated, and prosperous people. The history books have been little help in this regard, though there are scattered clues for those with the time and inclination to carry out extensive research projects. In short, the St. Peter's reserve has received very little attention in the standard local and regional histories, in terms of highlighting the site's pre-European agriculture, its people's significant prosperity in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, or in terms of documenting the ultimate fate of the reserve and its inhabitants. For all their differences, pioneering and prominent works such as G.F.G. Stanley's *The Birth of Western Canada* (1936), W.L. Morton's *Manitoba: A History* (1957), and Gerald Friesen's *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (1987), made only passing references to the Saulteaux and the early existence of the reserve, and generally ignored the achievements and fate of indigenous peoples *after* the 19th century.

George Stanley's work made no direct mention of the St. Peter's reserve, and only passing reference to Henry Prince's "Saulteaux Indians" in the nearby vicinity. In direct contradiction to the history of St. Peter's, Stanley also asserted that the general rule in Canada was to allow the Indians "to choose their reserves in that part of the country to

which they belonged” and leave them to thrive “on the lands of their fathers, provided such lands were suitable to agriculture or pastoral pursuits.”³⁴ W.L. Morton made a few scattered references to the “St. Peter’s mission,” beginning with the establishment of a church (and parish) in 1836 by the Reverend William Cockran “to serve the Saulteaux converts of Peguis’ band [already] settled at Netley Creek.” Importantly, in Morton’s narrative, the St. Peter’s Indians had settled along the banks of the Red River, and were thriving agriculturalists, well before Cockran’s mission church, and indeed before the visit of Hudson’s Bay Company employee Nicholas Garry in 1821. However, Morton’s final reference to “the Indian settlement at St. Peter’s” was in a passage that noted that by 1871 the much-coveted “river lots” of the entire Red River valley were “solidly occupied.” The dissolution of the reserve, and the forced removal of the steadfast Indian allies who had been “enthusiastic” to fight the Métis on behalf of the Dominion, were simply omitted, and Morton’s narrative seamlessly segued into a new phase: the history of the town of Selkirk where the Indians once had been.³⁵

Gerald Friesen’s *The Canadian Prairies* opened with a critique of Morton’s earlier history of Manitoba, precisely for its neglect of Native history; and one of Friesen’s stated goals was to correct this omission, and recognize the pivotal place of Indian peoples in the history and shaping of the prairie provinces. Indeed, the bulk of Friesen’s first seven chapters were devoted to a narrative in which Indians and Métis figure prominently. However, apart from an early reference to Chief Peguis, and some general details about the negotiation of Treaty 1, Friesen’s history of the prairies made no

³⁴ See George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1936, reprint 1960, p. 18, 242.

³⁵ W.L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957, p. 60, 72, 130, 151, 174-75.

specific mention of the St. Peter's Indians. In discussing Treaty 1, Friesen quoted Lieutenant-Governor Adams Archibald as promising that Indian lands would be "lay[ed] aside ... to be used by you and your children forever. She [the Queen] will not allow the white men to intrude upon these lots." Friesen noted that these "were memorable words" in light of "the land surrenders that occurred in the following half-century" – of which the St. Peter's "removal" was merely one – but the narrative in his well-known prairie study does not go into further detail about the establishment of Indian reserves, or their subsequent dissolution. This is understandable, given the expansive scope of Friesen's survey. But in this one regard Friesen's narrative followed Morton's: the Indian history of St. Peter's was submerged by the history of the town of Selkirk, and its rivalry with Winnipeg over the location of prospective railways and river crossings.³⁶ It is important to note, however, that Friesen's later work *River Road* (1996) devoted two pages to the St. Peter's "removal," and argued that "[e]very Manitoban should be told" about how the St. Peter's Indians had been "cheated out of the land that had been theirs for more than a century."³⁷

Alan Artibise's classic study *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban growth, 1874-1914* (1975) not only made no reference to the pivotal St. Peter's reserve (in a book that ostensibly sought "to identify and describe the events, personages, trends, and movements which have played a key role in the development of Winnipeg"), but made no

³⁶ Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987, p. 115, 138-39.

³⁷ Gerald Friesen (co-written with Associate Chief Justice A.C. Hamilton and Associate Chief Judge C.M. Sinclair), "Justice Systems' and Manitoba's Aboriginal People: An Historical Survey," in Gerald Friesen, *River Road: Essays on Manitoba and Prairie History*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996, p. 64-65. This chapter is a revised and abridged version of Chapter 3 of A.C. Hamilton & C.M. Sinclair (eds.), *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry*, Vol. 1. Winnipeg: Queen's Printer, 1992.

significant mention of Aboriginal peoples at all. Artibise acknowledged in his preface that the name Winnipeg derived from the Cree words *win* (“muddy”) and *nippee* (“water”), and he noted early on that originally the territory had been populated by “no one but fur traders and Indians,” but beyond such passing references, neither indigenous peoples nor colonialism were presented as having “played a key role in the development of Winnipeg.” Like Morton and Friesen, Artibise devoted a good deal of time to the Selkirk-Winnipeg railroad rivalry, and much less attention to the fate of the prior owners of the land.³⁸ In other words, both in terms of highlighting its original existence, as well as in terms of the forces and events leading up to its dissolution after 1907, including the forcible relocation of the indigenous inhabitants, the St. Peter’s reserve has received absolutely no attention in the standard local and regional histories. The reserve simply “disappears” from the historical narrative of the Canadian West, and is replaced by a new history focusing on the town of Selkirk (as both rival and suburb of Winnipeg), an erasure as thorough and seemingly mysterious as the actual event itself.

Even works specifically focused on Aboriginal history have not paid significant attention to the St. Peter’s reserve, let alone its subsequent dissolution. For example, Laura Peers’ excellent book *The Ojibwa of Western Canada* (1994), which was the first serious attempt to construct a history of the Saulteaux (or Western Ojibwa) peoples, did not discuss the ultimate fate of the St. Peter’s Indians in any detail. Given both its scope and periodization, this is not surprising. But Peers nevertheless acknowledged that the Indians were ultimately cheated out of their reserve by means of “bribery and corrupt practices,” that they “received insufficient compensation for lands” taken, and were

³⁸ Alan Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth, 1874-1914*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1975, p.1. See pp. 9-13, 64-70.

relocated to a new reserve 100 kilometres to the north.³⁹ Frank Tough's book *'As Their Natural Resources Fail'* (1996) paid a good deal of attention to the St. Peter's Indians, particularly for a geographical study centred on northern Manitoba. However, like Peers' work, Tough's account of the St. Peter's removal was limited to a brief passage, in which the 1907 "surrender" was characterized as merely "controversial and divisive." Tough seemed reluctant to describe the "removal" as fraudulent and therefore invalid (as even the official 1911 St. Peter's Indian Reserve Commission concluded), but significantly, he did argue that it was motivated in part by "an isolationist rationale" that led directly to the "clear[ing] of Natives" from the coveted Red River settlement belt.⁴⁰ Only a few exceptional studies have acknowledged that the 1907 "surrender" was a legal fraud and travesty of justice, and that the indigenous inhabitants were relocated against their will.⁴¹ But even these exceptions have typically confined themselves to a few brief and tantalizing references.

To date, there have only been a small handful of works devoted exclusively to the St. Peter's (or later Peguis) Indians, and many of these remain unpublished reports or theses.⁴² The bulk of this writing has focused on the life and times of Peguis himself, or

³⁹ See Laura Peers, *The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780 to 1870*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1994, p. 204-05.

⁴⁰ See Frank Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1996, p. 172.

⁴¹ See for example, Olive P. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples From Earliest Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 305.

⁴² Michael P. Czuboka, "St. Peter's: A Historical Study With Anthropological Observations on the Christian Aborigines of Red River (1811-1876)." Thesis (M.A.): University of Manitoba, 1960; Angela D. Jeske, "St. Peter's Indian Settlement: A House Indian Community at Red River, 1833-1856." Thesis (M.A.): University of Alberta, 1990; Carolyn Podruchny, "Indians and Missionaries in Encounter: The Peguis Band and the Church Missionary Society at the Red River, 1820-1838." Thesis (M.A.): University

otherwise primarily confined itself to a pre-twentieth-century periodization. Even those works that discuss the 1907 surrender, almost universally fail to discuss the actual impact of the forced relocation on the St. Peter's people.⁴³ For example, Sarah Carter's important article in *Manitoba History* journal, one of the few *published* pieces to discuss the 1907 surrender in any detail, concluded that there was a "fraudulent surrender of the reserve" on behalf of speculators and colonizers. But the main focus of her piece was not the dissolution of the reserve, but rather the agricultural history of the site itself.⁴⁴

The only serious, in-depth study of the St. Peter's Reserve and its ignominious end remains an unpublished legal study commissioned almost thirty years ago by the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights and Research (TARR) Centre in Manitoba.⁴⁵ However, even this work by Tyler, Wright & Daniel Limited focuses almost exclusively on the role of individual corruption and land speculation in bringing about the "surrender" and sale of the reserve. The Tyler study has done more than any other work to bring to light the economic forces driving the St. Peter's land surrender, the personalities involved, and the

of Toronto, 1992; Benita E. Cohen, "The Development of Health Services in Peguis First Nation." Thesis (M. Sc.): University of Manitoba, 1994; George Van Der Goes Ladd, *Shall We Gather at the River?* Toronto: The United Church of Canada, 1986; Donna Sutherland, *Peguis: A Noble Friend*. St. Andrew's, Manitoba: Chief Peguis Heritage Park Inc., 2003; Chief Albert Edward Thompson, *Chief Peguis and His Descendants*. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers Limited, 1973; Sarah Carter, "St. Peter's and the Interpretation of the Agriculture of Manitoba's Aboriginal People," *Manitoba History* No. 18 (Autumn 1989); and Tyler, Wright & Daniel Limited, "The Illegal Surrender of the St. Peter's Reserve." Winnipeg: T.A.R.R. Centre of Manitoba, 1979 and 1983.

⁴³ Two exceptions to this rule are the late Albert Thompson's book *Chief Peguis and His Descendants* (1973), which incorporated some personal and family history about conditions at the new reserve, and Benita Cohen's study of "The Development of Health Services in Peguis First Nation" (1994), which also touched on the impact of the removal. See footnote 12 above for full citations. Cohen's thesis was an expanded version of the 1993 report she prepared for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

⁴⁴ Sarah Carter, "St. Peter's and the Interpretation of the Agriculture of Manitoba's Aboriginal People," *Manitoba History* (No. 18, Autumn 1989): 46-52.

⁴⁵ See Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender."

irregularities and outright frauds that were engaged in to secure Indian “consent” and transfer lands from Indians to white settlers. It has also brought to light the remarkable stories of two of the principal opponents of the St. Peter’s surrender: William Asham, a former Chief of the St. Peter’s band, and George Bradbury, the Conservative M.P. for Selkirk.

However, interested primarily in legal questions related to both the September 1907 surrender meeting and the land sales themselves, the Tyler report does not discuss the impact of the removal upon the indigenous inhabitants. (In fact, the narrative ends with the passage of the St. Peter’s Reserve Act of 1916.) Furthermore, it does not place the removal into a larger framework of settler-colonialism, beyond noting that it was not an aberration: St. Peter’s was the tip of the iceberg in terms of late-19th century and early-20th century land thefts.⁴⁶ Like most of Canadian, and even much of native-newcomer historiography, the Tyler report does not question the genealogy of title transfer deriving from the Hudson’s Bay Company charter of 1670, or the related assertions of British (and later Canadian) sovereignty that followed from such original presumptions of “divine right.” In short, the Tyler study presupposes the legitimacy of Canadian law in the Prairies, and its critique of the dissolution of the St. Peter’s Reserve is largely confined to flagrant violations of the colonizers’ own laws, as well as particularly blatant expressions of settler racism, rather than based on a critique of colonialism itself.⁴⁷ While it is an

⁴⁶ For example, Tyler et. al. note that Methodist missionary John Macdougall was involved helping to negotiate no less than seven reserve “surrenders” in 1906 alone. Tyler, p. 213. For a comprehensive survey of “surrenders” on the prairies, see Peggy Martin-McGuire, *First Nations Land Surrenders on the Prairies, 1896-1911*. Ottawa: Indian Claims Commission, 1998.

⁴⁷ This acceptance of the legitimacy of Canadian “Law” in the Prairies is shared by a broad spectrum of the historiographical field, from legal historians like Sidney Haring,

extremely valuable study, both in its own right and as a guide to further research, the assumptions and framework that inform the Tyler report arguably lend themselves to a distorted picture of the meaning and significance of the St. Peter's removal in Canadian history.

As an overview of the history and dispossession of the St. Peter's Indians, this thesis breaks new ground by juxtaposing the pivotal contribution of the St. Peter's Indians to Manitoba's history, as well as their agricultural prowess and economic successes prior to the twentieth-century, against their subsequent treatment, and the human consequences of their forced relocation. This is not to suggest that the St. Peter's Indians were somehow more "deserving" of justice for having excelled at one or more of the colonizers' rarely-adhered to precepts of "civilization." The tragedy would have been monumental regardless of whether or not those targeted for relocation primarily had been farmers or hunters, literate or illiterate, Christian converts or Ojibwa religious practitioners, and so on. The juxtaposition is important because it magnifies the nature of the impact on the people, and shows that what occurred was a kind of "de-development." It also tells us something about the seriousness of certain colonizer rationales for "removal," a matter that will be explored more fully later on. What follows is an admittedly tentative and preliminary contribution to our understanding of the impact of the St. Peter's removal. No attempt has been made here, for example, to incorporate Aboriginal oral history and testimony. While oral history would have contributed to a

to voices of the "new Indian history" such as J.R. Miller. See Sidney Haring, *White Man's Law: Native People in Nineteenth-Century Canadian Jurisprudence*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998; and J.R. Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989.

much more comprehensive and accurate picture of the human impact of the removal, it would have necessitated a much larger undertaking than was here possible.

In the process of telling the story of the St. Peter's Indians and the impact of their "removal," this thesis simultaneously and inevitably sheds some light on the nature of Canadian settler-colonialism, and contributes to our understanding of the implementation of Treaty 1. Chapter 2 provides a sketch of the history of the St. Peter's Indians and reserve to 1907, and attempts to situate settler-Aboriginal relations into a larger political, economic, and colonial context. It also briefly discusses the 1817 "Selkirk Treaty" and the 1871 "Stone Fort" treaty (Treaty 1) insofar as these relate to the Red River Saulteaux and later St. Peter's reserve. For example, it juxtaposes the clauses in the written text of Treaty 1 that relate to the reserve itself, as well as the Crown's promises in relation to regulating and preventing settler encroachment, against the subsequent implementation period leading up to the dissolution of the reserve. Treaty 1 promised that the St. Peter's Reserve would be "for the sole and exclusive use of the Indians," and specified in spirit, if not in detail, how European "settlers" who might squat or encroach upon Indian reserve lands would be dealt with. The written text reserved for "Her Majesty," acting through the Dominion, "the right to deal with such settlers *as she shall deem just*, so as not to diminish the extent of land allotted to the Indians."⁴⁸ In other words, the honour and justice of the Crown were pre-supposed and explicitly asserted, along with the *implication* that in any subsequent conflict between Indians and colonizers over "reserve" lands, the Indian rights to maintain their communal lands would be upheld. One of the

⁴⁸ Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-west Territories*. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1991, 1880 reprint, p.315. Emphasis added.

arguments of this thesis is that the ultimate dissolution of the reserve, and the forced removal of the St. Peter's Indians after 1907, and their relocation 105 kilometres north to Fisher River offers us some insight into what the Crown and colonizers did, in fact, "deem just."

Chapter 3 looks at the dissolution of the St. Peter's Reserve and the forced removal of the St. Peter's Indians from the fraudulent 1907 "surrender agreement," through the 1916 Act of Parliament, to the repatriation movement of 1932-33. Not wanting to duplicate the work of the existing TARR report on St. Peter's, however, the focus here will be primarily on the settler ideology and practice of racial, cultural, and religious exclusivism in relation to the dissolution of the St. Peter's Reserve and the forced removal of its Indian inhabitants. This ideology and practice will be situated into a larger framework of European settler-colonialism, land hunger, and indigenous dispossession, one that argues that the St. Peter's removal can most accurately be understood as an instance of ethnic cleansing. In the process, the thesis suggests that the mixture of underlying economic forces and racist rationalizations that together constitute the driving force behind ethnic cleansing, is in fact an integral feature of settler-colonialism itself.

Chapter 4 explores the actual impact of forced relocation on the St. Peter's Indians themselves, beginning with the first movement of small numbers of Band members after 1907, and extending into the 1930s. It juxtaposes the agricultural history, economic successes, and relative prosperity of the Indians prior to removal, against a preliminary assessment of the immediate and long-term consequences of forced relocation and subsequent life at the new Peguis Reserve at Fisher River. Not all St.

Peter's Indians moved to the new Peguis Reserve; many sought employment elsewhere, or applied for transfer to other reserves where they had kin. But the majority of those who "voluntarily" left or were expelled from St. Peter's eventually ended up at Peguis, and were confined to their new reserve under a variant of the infamous "pass system" of 1885. The consequences of forced relocation are here assessed in terms of an array of quality of life indicators, such as housing, health, education, and employment, as well as through a tentative discussion of the impact on the spiritual beliefs and practices, cultural identity, and political cohesion of the St. Peter's Indians as a whole.

Before proceeding, a brief discussion of terminology is warranted, in part because "ethnic cleansing" is not a term typically employed by Canadian historians to describe aspects of Canadian history in general, nor to characterize Indian-White relations and colonialism in North America in particular. Part of the explanation for this may simply be the relatively recent origin of the term, and its original use by Serbian nationalists as a euphemism to mask their targeted dispossession of Kosovars and others from coveted land. But I think this reluctance also originates elsewhere – the same place, in fact, that produces a reluctance on the part of traditional Canadian historiography to employ related concepts like "genocide," or for that matter, to acknowledge the essential violence and coercion of British and later Canadian colonialism. (As opposed to the typically smug and hypocritical denunciations in Canadian literature that are often made in reference to American, or say, Spanish treatment of indigenous peoples.) Regardless of the origin of this reluctance, however, it seems clear that *both* ethnic cleansing and genocide have been, and in many respects *remain*, primary features of settler-colonialism in North

America – not just in the United States, but also in British North America after 1776, and in Canada after its transcontinental consolidation between 1867 and 1885.

Defining what is meant by “ethnic cleansing” is therefore critical – all the more so, when one takes a look at how the term has already been employed (and abused) by historians of indigenous history in North America. Perhaps the worst culprit in this respect has been Daniel K. Richter, whose 2001 book *Facing East From Indian Country* professed to be a re-visioning of native history from the standpoint of indigenous peoples. In his final chapter entitled “Separate Creations,” Richter described what he called a “tragic” descent into “nativist” and “settler” exclusivist ideology and “extremism,” arguing that settler violence by groups like the infamous “Paxton Boys,” and *Indian resistance* exemplified by Pontiac, were essentially a “mirror image” of one another. In Richter’s skewed narrative, *both* sides had what he called the “rage to destroy the hated other,” and as such, *both* were the moral equivalent to “ethnic cleansers.”⁴⁹

Part of the problem with Richter’s framework derives from the fact that he never defined his terminology, and as a result, the implication is that *any* attempt to expel any other ethnic, cultural, or religious group from a given territory qualifies as “hatred” and “ethnic cleansing.” Richter leaves out such trivial concerns as historical context and social justice, not to mention core principles of international law such as the right of a people to live within secure borders, not to mention their right to resist foreign invasion, military occupation, and collective dispossession. In essence, by conflating the racial-exclusivism of a foreign colonizer, with the resistance of the colonized (however exclusivist in its configuration), Richter implicitly denies the right of a people – any

⁴⁹ Daniel K. Richter, *Facing East From Indian Country*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2001, p. 190.

people – to resist foreign aggression, or repel foreign occupiers once they have actually taken your homes and “settled.”

According to Drazen Petrovic, who published one of the first scholarly articles addressing the meaning and scope of the term,

[E]thnic cleansing is a well-defined policy of a particular group of persons to systematically eliminate another group from a given territory on the basis of religious, ethnic or national origin. Such a policy involves violence and is very often connected with military operations. It is to be achieved by all possible means, from discrimination to extermination, and entails violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.⁵⁰

Petrovic went on to note that ethnic cleansing assumes different forms, “ranging from simple administrative and economic discrimination to the extermination of a target group,” and that these differences “seem to depend primarily on the means at the disposal of different parties and the global character of their projects.” He concluded that ethnic cleansing “can occur and have terrible consequences in all territories with mixed populations, especially in attempts to redefine frontiers and rights over given territories.”⁵¹

Michael Mann’s recent comparative study of ethnic cleansing on a global scale dedicated a chapter to describing how such systematic policies have been carried out in settler-colonial contexts, including North America and Australia. According to Mann, “[a]n *ethnicity* is a group that defines itself or is defined by others as sharing common descent or culture. So *ethnic cleansing* is the removal by members of one such group of

⁵⁰ Drazen Petrovic, “Ethnic Cleansing – An Attempt at Methodology,” *European Journal of International Law* 5 (1994), p. 351.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 352, 358.

another such group from a locality they define as their own.”⁵² Mann’s study distinguished between “murderous” and “non-murderous” forms of ethnic cleansing, and constructed a model that featured two distinct continua: 1) degree of violence employed, and 2) degree or “totality” of target-group elimination sought.⁵³ Direct, physical murder designed to eliminate a people *as such* is one extreme form, most famously exemplified by the Nazi holocaust against Jews, Gypsies, and other targeted groups. But Mann makes it clear that ethnic cleansing and genocide need not involve physical killing in order to be “successful.”

Furthermore, Mann’s chapter on settler-colonialism and indigenous peoples argues that the United States and Australia were two of the worst cases, where settler-states committed “the most successful [ethnic] cleansing the world may have ever seen.”⁵⁴ For Mann, ethnic cleansing within North America took many forms, ranging from assimilation, to forced relocation and segregation on reserves, to mass murder, each form propelled, shaped, or limited by a range of economic, ideological, cultural and historical factors. Mann’s comparative study led him to conclude that one of the worst phenomena from the standpoint of driving ethnic cleansing was a particular type of settler-colonialism, one which did “not requir[e] native labor.”⁵⁵ But regardless of the means adopted, the end sought in North America, as in other sites of ethnic cleansing, was a “clearing” of lands of an indigenous or other targeted people, and a concomitant “extinguishment” of memory and title, to make room for colonizers who defined

⁵² Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 11.

⁵³ See the chart in Mann, *Dark Side of Democracy*, p. 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

themselves as ethnically, culturally, and religiously superior. Hudson's Bay Company director George Simpson described the perceived, and in some cases sought-after, end of the Indian as "mysterious Providence," a divine teleology that would hand the Promised Land over to Europe's "Chosen People."⁵⁶ Both colonial elites and ordinary settlers ranged in their attitudes, goals, and strategies in terms of lamenting, ignoring, or expediting such "Providence." According to Mann, "moderation" in this context was to call for segregation, not extermination. But even "moderation" was a form of ethnic cleansing, a phenomenon that Mann concluded was "central to the liberal modernity of the New World."⁵⁷

If we accept Petrovic's and Mann's minimalist definitions, we can see how brilliantly deceptive is Daniel Richter's formulation in *Facing East From Indian Country*, in terms of its reversal of the accepted norms of international law regarding colonialism, occupation and resistance – precisely because Richter's characterization of Pontiac's indigenous resistance conforms to the basic elements of Petrovic's and Mann's formal definitions of "ethnic cleansing." But considering that Richter is unlikely to employ his own framework in a way that might call into question, for example, French or Polish resistance to Nazi occupation, and resistance to the Nazis' forcible relocation (let alone mass murder) of "unwanted" ethnic-religious groups, and their replacement by German "settlers," we can only conclude that Richter thinks indigenous peoples alone have no right to resist occupation and settler-colonialism.

Fortunately, Richter appears to be unique among scholars in equating indigenous resistance to European colonialism in North America with "ethnic cleansing," though his

⁵⁶ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95-108.

dubious assertion finds parallels in at least one other historiographical field.⁵⁸ A number of prominent historians of U.S. and native North American history, such as John Mack Faragher, Theda Perdue, and Michael Green have begun to describe various aspects of North American settler-colonialism as constituting ethnic cleansing.⁵⁹ In contrast to Richter, their works do not suggest a “moral equivalency” between the violence of the colonizer and colonized, nor imply that indigenous resistance also constitutes ethnic cleansing.

Richter’s subterfuge highlights the importance of honing our understanding and definition of “ethnic cleansing.” In order to mesh with existing collective rights affirmed both by international law and elementary justice, ethnic cleansing ought to encompass any systematic attempt to rid a designated territory of a targeted ethnic-religious-cultural group, *other than* the resistance of a colonized people attempting to expel a foreign invader, occupier, or settler-colonial regime. According to this definition, ethnic cleansing can take genocidal forms, when the colonizer, occupier, or power centre in

⁵⁸ A review of the historiography related to Israel-Palestine may offer clues as to the origins of Richter’s framework for describing Pontiac’s resistance as an example of ethnic cleansing. A central myth in the Israeli historiography has been the notion of Palestinians seeking, inexplicably, to “push the Jews into the sea.” But the historical reality has been one in which *Palestinians* – the indigenous majority pre-1948 – have lost 78% of their ancestral homeland, and the majority of Palestinians today live outside of their people’s historic homeland. Israeli historiography has been remarkably successful at standing this reality on its head, as a recent study by Ilan Pappé has shown. See Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006.

⁵⁹ For example, John Mack Faragher, “‘More Motley than Mackinaw:’ From Ethnic Mixing to Ethnic Cleansing on the Frontier of the Lower Missouri, 1783-1833,” in Andrew R.L. Cayton & Fredrika J. Teute (eds.). *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998: pp. 304-326; Theda Perdue and Michael Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*. New York: Viking, 2007.

question decides that it is “better” to physically kill the group they wish to dispel,⁶⁰ or when they try to “assimilate” them into the colonial society regardless of the articulated motivation.⁶¹ But ethnic cleansing is not, according to this definition, *inherently* genocidal in intent or function, if it is restricted to what is usually referred to more politely as “removal,” or “population transfer.”

Ethnic Cleansing and *genocide* are thus distinct but related terms. They often overlap in practice, but they are not synonyms. In relation to what is typically, and euphemistically called an Indian “removal” in North America, it is clear that each and every one of these can be classified as ethnic cleansing, without needing to know the intentions and even consequences of the “removal” in question. In short, ethnic cleansing has a lesser burden of proof than genocide, the latter requiring some discussion of either intent or consequences. The “proof” for ethnic cleansing requires neither. The *fact of removal* of a targeted people, singled out on the basis of their ethnicity, culture, or religion is sufficient. In practice, however, it is crucial to note that many of these “removals” have also been genocidal in their impact, if not in their explicit intent.⁶² But

⁶⁰ “Better” from this perspective has usually meant cheaper, or easier, in either a military, or diplomatic-propagandistic sense, but historically, it has rarely been the *first* recourse of perpetrators and state terrorists. See, for example, Christopher Browning, *Nazi Policy, Jewish Workers, German Killers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

⁶¹ Assimilation policies are typically rationalized as being in the “best interests” of both the dominant society and the target group, though sometimes they are openly presented as an alternate means of elimination for an allegedly “inferior” people or culture. For a treatment of assimilation as genocide in a global perspective, see Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy*. For a treatment of assimilation as genocide in specific reference to indigenous North America, see Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 1998; Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2004.

⁶² The Trail of Tears is the most well-known example of ethnic cleansing in Native North America, but it was by no means an aberration. See Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee*

the actual impact on the people removed has typically been secondary, or even considered irrelevant to the perpetrators of the ethnic cleansing itself.

Every definition begs further questions, and any discussion of ethnic cleansing raises second-order questions related to geographical scope, who or what constitutes a “nation” or “people,” the length of residency of both colonizer and colonized, as well as scale or totality of dispersal or destruction. Such second-order questions are often raised in order to discredit charges of ethnic cleansing and genocide,⁶³ but there are nevertheless legitimate issues to debate, and reasonable people will no doubt disagree. Unfortunately, space limitations prevent a full treatment of these issues here. It is important to note, however, that the distance a people is relocated (geographical scope), the number expelled or killed either in absolute terms or as a percentage of the total (scale of dispersal or destruction), the degree of violence employed, and the duration of the crime (brevity or longevity of dispersal), need not be high in order for the relocation to constitute ethnic cleansing.

It is also important to preface any discussion of the St. Peter’s removal by noting that it was not an isolated event. It was part of a concerted attempt to eliminate the Indian presence upon, and title to lands coveted by white settlers. Countless examples of

Nation and the Trail of Tears, p. 42. For an example of forced relocation *not* motivated by an immediate settler desire for lands, and one that led directly to the deaths of fully one-third of the Sayisi Dene population in northern Manitoba, see Ila Bussidor & Ustun Bilgen-Reinart. *Night Spirits: The Story of the Relocation of the Sayisi Dene*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2000, p. 123. One may debate whether the Sayisi Dene case fits under the rubric of “ethnic cleansing,” but its impact was clearly genocidal.

⁶³ I will only mention one salient example from personal experience. I presented a conference paper on the St. Peter’s removal at which a participant argued that the fact that there were still Indian reserves in southern Manitoba today suggested that there could not have been a very “successful” ethnic cleansing. It is an historical fallacy rarely articulated in other contexts, and in fact, similar “logic” has been denounced as “holocaust denial” in other contexts.

lands ostensibly “reserved in perpetuity” for specific Indian bands or peoples, either by formal treaty or by mutually-recognized occupancy, or both, were thus “surrendered” and their peoples relocated. The first reserves eliminated tended to be those nearest to white population centres, or those falling on lands desired for prospective roads and railways. (St. Peter’s lands, to the lasting detriment of the actual owners, had both.) Most often, Indian Affairs officials attempted to secure “voluntary” reserve surrenders, but as the history of St. Peter’s demonstrates, Indian “consent” was often manufactured by a mixture of Band Council collusion, bribery, threats, and fraud – a potent mixture for a colonized people to resist. For those “recalcitrant” Indians who failed to act in their own “best interests,” the government dispensed with the pretense of consent altogether, and passed more coercive legislation such as the Oliver Act. Named after Frank Oliver (the Minister of the Interior and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs between 1905 and 1911), the Oliver Act was a formal measure “allowing” Indians to be forcibly removed from any reserves adjacent to, or partly within, a colonial settlement of greater than 8,000 people.⁶⁴ Lofty sentiments were routinely expressed to rationalize such removals in the Indians’ “best interests.” But the overall effect was the abolition of a great many so-called reserves, such as the St. Clair Ojibwa reserve at Sarnia, the Songhees reserve which was relocated to make way for Victoria, B.C., the Squamish lands that were taken and have become Vancouver’s Kitsilano, the Pahlpahstayo reserve which became

⁶⁴ Dickason, *Canada’s First Nations*, p. 301. Selkirk’s settler population in 1907 was only about 2,700 people, and did not break Oliver’s arbitrary target of 8,000 until the late-1950s. See Riley Moffat, *Population History of Cities and Towns in Canada, Australia, & New Zealand: 1861-1996*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001.

southeast Edmonton, and so on.⁶⁵ The St. Peter's reserve, being "too close" to Selkirk, and situated on prime river-front agricultural land, was thus one of many examples.

A second point that needs to be emphasized when discussing the St. Peter's case, even when situated within the wave of ostensibly "voluntary" surrenders and forced removals that occurred in the late-1890s and early 1900s, is that these nation-wide removals were themselves merely the tip of the iceberg. They represent what might be called the "post-removal removals," a *second* wave of ethnic cleansing that was much more limited in both its geographical scope (i.e., in terms of the amount of land stolen, and, in effect, cleared of indigenous inhabitants), as well as in terms of its human and cultural toll, than the first wave. The first wave of ethnic cleansing on the Canadian Prairies was directly related to the imposition of the reservation system itself, and the attempt to confine indigenous peoples to these reserves, both before and after the notorious "pass system" of 1885 was introduced. The reservation system in Canada is not typically described as a manifestation of ethnic cleansing. But it is clear that a primary colonizer goal was "to clear the land" for what were considered "real" settlers. In Canada's annexation of the "Northwest" this was understood ideally to be someone of British or Anglo-Saxon heritage, an ideal routinely and openly expressed by prominent colonial elites and newspapers, although other "white" immigrants were also sought.⁶⁶ In both waves of ethnic cleansing, Indians were seen as an obstacle to "settlement" and

⁶⁵ For references to the Songhees and Kitsilano examples, see Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007, 3rd edition, p. 170-71; and Canada, *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Vol. 1*, p. 372-76. For references to Sarnia and Pahpahstayo, see Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, p. 301, 305.

⁶⁶ For an elaboration of this theme, see Paul Burrows, "Apostle of Anarchy: Emma Goldman's First Visit to Winnipeg in 1907," *Manitoba History* No. 57 (February 2008): 2-15.

“development” by and for white colonizers. What differentiates the “post-removal removals” (of which St. Peter’s is but one example) from the earlier wave of ethnic cleansing is that the later removals generally set their sights on lands originally-deemed to be beyond the Pale of settler acquisition, for a variety of historical reasons. These reasons ranged from a necessary, but temporary prudence that waned in proportion to the growth of the settler population, to initial dismissal of the economic benefits of the land itself. But thirty to fifty years after the treaties promised not only reserves in perpetuity, but hunting and fishing rights, educational, medical, and farming assistance, and other benefits in exchange for sharing the land, prudence was no longer an obstacle, and lands once-dismissed as un-arable, or devoid of resource value, were viewed in a different light. By 1930, only 2.6 percent of the land in Manitoba was “reserved” for Indians, as compared to the 6.1 percent held by a single corporation (the HBC), and 16.9 percent reserved for railways.⁶⁷

The third and final point that needs to be emphasized when discussing the St. Peter’s case as an incident of ethnic cleansing is that forced removals, and other “softer” mechanisms to eliminate the last vestiges of Indian reserve lands and title, are not confined to the distant past. For example, the Keeseekoowenin (*anishinaabe*) of Riding Mountain were evicted in 1936, their Treaty 2 reserve lands were taken for the Riding Mountain National Park, and their homes were subsequently burned to the ground.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Tough, “*As Their Natural Resources Fail*,” p. 284-85.

⁶⁸ See Peter L. Neufeld, “How the Saulteaux-Cree Were Driven Out of Riding Mountain Park,” *Indian Record* 44/3 (1985); Marilyn K. Peckett, “Anishnabe Homeland History: Traditional Land & Resource Use of Riding Mountain, Manitoba.” Master’s Practicum, Natural Resource Institute: University of Manitoba, 1999; and John Sandlos, “Not Wanted in the Boundary: The Expulsion of the Keeseekoowenin Ojibway Band from

More recently, the Sayisi Dene of Duck Lake (in northern Manitoba) were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands in 1956. Whether it qualifies as a case of “ethnic cleansing” or not, the relocation of the Sayisi Dene was also clearly genocidal in its effect, and *predictably* so, when one notes that no adequate housing or infrastructure was set up in advance, and the people were left to fend for themselves on the icy shores of Hudson’s Bay, north of the town of Churchill, with winter fast approaching. One-third of the population was killed as a direct consequence of this forced relocation.⁶⁹

Ultimately, the fate of the St. Peter’s Indians tells us much about the nature and justice of Canadian settler-colonialism. It also tells us something of the seriousness with which the dominant colonial society entered into treaty negotiations, and made promises to safeguard Indian lands. The St. Peter’s Indians, perhaps more than any other Aboriginal people of the Prairies, were the allies of the HBC and the British Crown. In the standard histories of Manitoba and the prairies, they were the “noble friends” who literally helped the early Selkirk settlers to survive, defended them from their enemies, and remained steadfast allies into the twentieth-century. Peguis and his people have occasionally been criticized for this “collaboration.”⁷⁰ But it did not save them. In the end, they too were dispossessed and pushed beyond the pale of immediate Euro-Canadian settlement. As W.L. Morton noted, by 1852 the river lots of the St. Andrew’s and Middlechurch Parishes immediately south of St. Peter’s had already become “congested” with European and Métis settlers, and by 1871 the river lots of the entire “settlement belt”

Riding Mountain National Park,” *Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 89, No. 2 (June 2008).

⁶⁹ Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart, *Night Spirits*, p. 123.

⁷⁰ For example, Peguis was criticized for helping the colonizers to “legitimize their appropriation of land for settlement,” and for being William Cockran’s “necessary Indian” in Van Der Goes Ladd, *Shall We Gather at the River?*, p. 21, 97.

of the Red and Assiniboine rivers had become “solidly occupied.”⁷¹ The fertile river-front St. Peter’s lands, so close to the burgeoning Town of Selkirk, were considered far too valuable to be left in the hands of “mere Indians,” regardless of how well the St. Peter’s Indians conformed to the colonizer’s ideal, if rarely practiced, vision of “civilization.” In the 1880s and 1890s, the St. Peter’s Indians had been compared favourably by Indian Agents and others, vis-à-vis their white neighbours, in everything from housing, agriculture, farming implements, income, luxury items, and fashion pretensions, to education, literacy, intelligence, manners, and “morality.”⁷² St. Peter’s had been the Indian Department’s banner reserve in the region, proof positive in its eyes that the “civilizing mission” of the settler society was a success. But despite – and arguably because of – the economic successes, increasing independence, and commercial competitiveness of the St. Peter’s Indians, new rationalizations for “Indian removal” gained ascendance. As early as 1883, prominent Selkirk settler James Colcleugh had promoted a petition calling on the Dominion government to dissolve the St. Peter’s reserve as a “drawback to our growth and prosperity.”⁷³ In 1901, the *Selkirk Expositor* printed an opinion piece criticizing Selkirk business interests for trying to get rid of the St. Peter’s Indians “by hook or by crook,” including proposals to “remove” the Indians to Fort Alexander.⁷⁴ T.W. Crothers, Minister of Interior, noted that by the fall of 1906 the colonial government had come to share this priority.⁷⁵ Within a year’s time the desired “removal” had reached a watershed, and the once-heralded “friendship” and “nobility” of

⁷¹ Morton, *Manitoba*, p. 88, 151-53.

⁷² Carter, “St. Peter’s and the Interpretation of the Agriculture of Manitoba’s Aboriginal People,” p. 49-52; Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*, p. 211-16.

⁷³ Cited in Carter, “St. Peter’s,” p. 50.

⁷⁴ Neil Herman, “The Removal of the Indian,” *Selkirk Expositor*, 12 April 1901, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 227.

the St. Peter's Indians were quickly forgotten by both settler and historian – forgotten almost as quickly as the solemn promises and treaty guarantees of 1871, and the honour and justice of “Her Majesty,” Queen Victoria.

A conscious effort has been made not to homogenize either colonizer or colonized, nor present indigenous peoples as simply passive victims of forces beyond their control.⁷⁶ Woven into this narrative of dispossession and settler ideology is also an inspiring history of dissent and resistance, both within the St. Peter's band itself, and to a lesser degree within the larger colonial society. The actions of Indian leaders such as William Asham, and later Alex and Norbert Grey Eyes, Angus Prince, Henry Pahkoo, and others, clearly demonstrate that a range of strategies were adopted by St. Peter's Indians to resist the surrender and dissolution of their reserve: from petitions and efforts at Band Council impeachment, to litigation, and finally, to direct action and civil disobedience. As a recent (May 2008) settlement offer in an ongoing, decades-long legal battle demonstrates, efforts by St. Peter's (now Peguis) Indians to reclaim their original lands, or gain some measure of justice, did not cease after the repatriation efforts of the early 1930s.⁷⁷ The struggle for compensation, acknowledgement of wrong-doing, and even land reclamation itself continues to the present day. Since the “new Indian history” of the 1970s, it has become commonplace in both Canada and the United States to affirm Indian “agency.” This has been a welcome development in a field that had long-treated indigenous peoples as less-than-human obstacles to “settlement” and “progress,” and as

⁷⁶ For a look at how one dissident sector or ideology within colonial society viewed indigenous peoples, see Paul Burrows, “Anarchism, Colonialism, and Aboriginal Dispossession in the Canadian West,” unpublished paper presented to the Canadian Historical Association, Saskatoon, May 2007.

⁷⁷ See *Winnipeg Free Press* articles of May 23-24, 2008 on the proposed \$126 million Peguis deal, the largest specific land claim settlement offer in Canadian history.

often-irrational foils for white actors. However, less common has been a critical framework that acknowledges very real colonial constraints and culpability.⁷⁸ In fact, as R.J. Brownlie and Mary-Ellen Kelm have argued, Indian “agency” has often been employed in a fashion that lets colonialism as a whole off the hook.⁷⁹ In trying to hold up a mirror to the innately-ugly face of settler-colonialism, and capturing something of the spirit of human resistance in the figures of Asham, Grey Eyes, and other St. Peter’s Indians, I do not pretend to have discovered, let alone achieved, a new and more profound synthesis. For all its shortcomings, I hope that what follows will contribute in some small way to both historical scholarship and social justice.

⁷⁸ Some of the best examples, in terms of trying to balance Indian agency and colonial culpability, include Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999; Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997; and Olive P. Dickason, *Canada’s First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 3rd edition.

⁷⁹ For an excellent treatment of these issues, see R.J. Brownlie & Mary-Ellen Kelm, “Desperately Seeking Absolution: Native Agency As Colonialist Alibi?,” *Canadian Historical Review* LXXV, No. 4 (December 1994): 453-556.

CHAPTER 2

GEOGRAPHIES OF DISPOSSESSION: CANADIAN COLONIALISM
AND THE ST. PETER'S INDIANS TO 1907

In 1811 the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) agreed to grant a vast tract of land, which it neither owned nor controlled, to a Scottish noble named Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk, for the nominal price of ten shillings.⁸⁰ The rough boundaries of Selkirk's grant were stipulated, along with other contractual obligations, in a negotiated settlement and "legal deed" that was signed by the respective parties on 12 June 1811. This territory, which was to be called Assiniboia after one of the indigenous peoples of the region, was "bounded on the East by the Lake and River Winnipeg, on the North by the parallels of Latitude 52 ½° as far Westward as little Winnipeg Lake and from thence by the parallel of Latitude 52 to the point at which this parallel intersects the Red River – and on the West by a line to be drawn from the above-mentioned point of Intersection in a direction due South to the Southern Boundary of the Company's Territories."⁸¹ In essence, Selkirk's Assiniboia grant encompassed a territory that centred on the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers and radiated outward to include most of what is now southern Manitoba, as well as parts of present-day Saskatchewan, Ontario, North Dakota, and Minnesota. It was an area of 116,000 square miles, or approximately five times the size of Lord Selkirk's native Scotland.⁸²

⁸⁰ Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, p. 70-72; Morton, *Manitoba*, p. 44-45; E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870*. Volume II: 1763-1870. London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959, p. 300-01.

⁸¹ Cited in Rich, *History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. II, p. 301.

⁸² Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, p. 72; Morton, *Manitoba*, p. 45; Rich, *History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, Vol. II, p. 301.

Selkirk's grant overlapped and conflicted with an earlier, and equally dubious property transaction known as the "Louisiana Purchase." In 1803 France had agreed to sell its increasingly tenuous claim to an even greater expanse of territory to the United States for the sum of 80 million francs, or approximately \$15 million.⁸³ The precise boundaries of this earlier "purchase" were more lofty and less certain than Selkirk's grant, particularly in relation to both Spanish and British continental claims, but it has generally been understood to encompass the settlement of New Orleans, control over the mouth of the Mississippi River, as well as a vast inland region from the Mississippi River west to the Rocky Mountains, and extending from the Gulf coast north to present-day Canada.

It is not surprising that these two property transactions conflicted with one another. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, most of North America was still contested by one or another "Old World" imperial power: Britain in the north, Spain in the south and west, and Russia in the northwest.⁸⁴ The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size (or more accurately, pretensions) of a fourth imperial power – the United States –

⁸³ Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967, Third Edition, p.244; Peter Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2004, p.40; and Jon Kukla. *A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003, p.287, 335.

⁸⁴ Russia's own "fur-trade" empire extended from Alaska down the Pacific coast, and included forts as far as present-day California. Spain's Mexican "border" extended as far north as present-day Oregon and east over the Rockies, encompassing present-day California, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and most of Texas. British North American claims included present-day Canada (including all of New France after the "Seven Years War"), as well as a disputed "Oregon Territory," which encompassed the present-day states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and any parts of Montana and Wyoming west of the Rockies. For a chronological progression of historical maps showing such imperial claims and treaties, see James Adams (ed.), *Atlas of American History*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.

whose leading lights of statecraft and industry had long fantasized about a trans-continental, if not hemispheric “American” empire.⁸⁵ The Hudson’s Bay Company grant to Lord Selkirk, for the express purpose of establishing an agricultural colony at Red River, was backed by an even older British imperial claim to “Rupert’s Land” going back to the HBC’s incorporation by Royal Charter in 1670. Rupert’s Land, named after Prince Rupert (cousin of King Charles II and first Governor of the HBC), was a territory that encompassed all the rivers, lakes, waterways, and associated lands that drained into Hudson’s Bay.⁸⁶ Taken literally, the 1670 Charter, which purported to make the principal men of the HBC into “true and absolute Lordes and Proprietors” of this territory, easily encompassed most of northern and central Canada, as well as parts of present-day United States. Needless to say, there was considerable overlap between what the British claimed as southern Rupert’s Land, including the Selkirk grant, and what the French and later United States claimed as “Upper Louisiana.”

Leaving aside these conflicting imperial pretensions, and their overlapping derivative “purchases,” there was a more fundamental problem with both the Selkirk grant and the Louisiana Purchase that is rarely acknowledged in Canadian and U.S. history. Not one of the distinct Aboriginal nations within the boundaries of the purported “property transactions” had sold their lands, or relinquished their sovereignty – not to

⁸⁵ Thomas Jefferson’s articulation of this prerogative in November 1801 (shortly after being elected president) was emblematic. In a letter to James Monroe, he stated that America’s destiny was to multiply and expand in order to “cover the whole northern, if not southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar forms, and by similar laws.” Cited in Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building*. New York: Schocken Books, 1980, p.80, and Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981, p.92-93.

⁸⁶ Rich, *History of the Hudson’s Bay Company*. Volume I, p. 53.

Britain or its eastern colonies in Upper and Lower Canada, not to France or Spain, nor to the relatively-recent breakaway colony of the United States.⁸⁷ To give one salient example relevant to *both* the Selkirk grant and Louisiana Purchase, the people typically referred to and conflated as “Sioux” were one of the most powerful Indian nations residing within and beyond the territorial overlap between Selkirk’s Assiniboia, and the region that the United States then called “Upper Louisiana.” Sioux territory primarily centred upon the sacred *Paha Sapa* (Black Hills), dominated parts of the Upper Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, and ranged from present-day Minnesota and the Dakotas, to Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana, and often into what is now Canada.⁸⁸ But at the time of the Louisiana Purchase – and the United States’ *declared* extension of “sovereignty” and “protection” over the lands and peoples therein – the U.S. had not entered into a single treaty with representatives of the Sioux nation.⁸⁹ In fact, apart from occasional European traders (most of whom were French, *canadien*, Métis, or even Spanish), few if any “Americans” had ever met the Sioux.⁹⁰ Not only did the United

⁸⁷ In the territory of the Selkirk Grant that falls within present-day Canada, this included the Crees, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux (or Western Ojibwa). In the area of the Louisiana Purchase, this included Kiowas, Apaches, Arapahoes, Arikaras, Poncas, Lakotas, Dakotas, Mandans, Hidatsas, Cheyennes, Blackfeet, Shoshones, Pawnees, Nez Percés, and Crows.

⁸⁸ The Sioux were divided into three main groups: the Teton, Santee, and Yankton. (In their own language, they referred to these three kin-groups as Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota respectively.) See Edward Lazarus, *Black Hills White Justice: The Sioux Nation Versus the United States, 1775 to the Present*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991, p.4.

⁸⁹ For the formal text of all treaties and agreements entered into with the Sioux (1805-1882) see Charles J. Kappler (ed.), *Indian Affairs. Laws and Treaties. Vol. II. (Treaties)*. 1904 reprint. New York: AMS Press Inc., 1971.

⁹⁰ French traders were among the first Europeans to meet the Sioux and Mandan peoples and later to reach the Upper Missouri river, from Pierre Radisson’s expedition in 1654-60 to La Verendrye in the 1730s. Even Spain maintained a nominal “rule” over the Upper Missouri for a forty-year period between the Treaty of Paris (1763) and the Louisiana

States have no ability to exercise its desired authority on the ground, it knew almost nothing about the physical and cultural geography of the vast Louisiana Purchase. The Lewis and Clark and lesser-known Zebulon Pike expeditions were attempts to rectify this lack of intelligence, but as the Pike example illustrates, American diplomatic and trade expeditions were barred from the territory altogether, enforced through seizure and arrest by *Spanish* colonial officials, in large parts of the territory that the U.S. now claimed to own (post-1803).

Likewise, at the time of the HBC “grant” to Selkirk, the British had not entered into a single treaty that might be construed as a general cession of land or sovereignty with and by the indigenous inhabitants and owners of the territory of the Assiniboine and Red River valleys – let alone with the Sioux further south.⁹¹ HBC, Northwest Company, and French *canadien* knowledge of interior river systems and indigenous peoples within the area of the Selkirk grant was substantially greater than U.S. knowledge had been of “Upper Louisiana.” But Britain’s audacity for designating itself, or more precisely, a favoured chartered company, as the “true and absolute Lordes and Proprietors” of Rupert’s Land, was just as great and disconnected from the reality on the ground as Jeffersonian pretenses. As Arthur Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough suggest, the entire history of HBC trade with the indigenous peoples of Rupert’s Land, going back to York

Purchase – largely unbeknownst to the actual inhabitants and owners of the land – and it was the Spanish, not the Americans who first established a European settlement and fort at St. Louis in 1764, at the intersection of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. See Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975, third edition, revised, p.27-30.

⁹¹ See the index entries under “Cree or Killistine Indians” (p.xvi), “Saulteaux or Chippewa Indians” (p.l), and “Stony or Assiniboine Indians” (p.liv), as well as under “Manitoba” (p.xxxiii), in Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders: Volume 1: Treaties 1-138*. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1992, original publication 1891.

Factory in the 1680s, and extending through to the Selkirk grant of 1811, can be seen as an acknowledgement *in practice* that the British Crown's assertion of title was meaningless on the ground. Prudence demanded Aboriginal consent not only to establish forts on the shores of Hudson's Bay (and later in the interior), but also simply to engage in trade – precisely because “Rupert's Land” was *not* British soil. From its earliest days, HBC personnel were given explicit instructions to obtain this consent, by making whatever “compacts” of “friendship and peaceable cohabitation” with the Indians as might be required to secure the company's “liberty of trade and commerce.”⁹² In other words, Charles II's “divine right of kings” and the HBC Charter notwithstanding, the HBC had no choice but to recognize indigenous peoples' *de facto* ownership, control, and title to the entire domain of Rupert's Land. Its ability to conduct trade, and in some cases, the very lives of its officers and personnel depended upon it. As will become apparent, prudence continued to require such an acknowledgement of Aboriginal ownership well after the foundation of the Selkirk settlement in 1812.

One of the principal indigenous peoples of the lower Red River valley at the time of the Selkirk grant of 1811 was the Saulteaux, or Western Ojibwa.⁹³ The Saulteaux were relatively recent immigrants to the region, having moved into the territory as permanent residents only in the 1780s or 90s. Available evidence suggests that the Saulteaux were only able to establish this permanent foothold in what had previously been Cree and Assiniboine territory due to the apocalyptic ravages of the smallpox

⁹² Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller, & Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000, p. 3-5.

⁹³ The Saulteaux have also been referred to as Soto, Saulteurs, Chippewa, plains Ojibwa, Bungi, Bungee, and Anishinabe at various times and places. I have here followed Laura Peers and generally used Saulteaux and western Ojibwa interchangeably. See Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. xv-xviii.

epidemic of 1779-83, which reached the Red River valley in late-1781.⁹⁴ Estimates of mortality among the Cree have varied from half to as high as 98% in some areas.⁹⁵ According to both Laura Peers and Paul Hackett, the Ojibwa were also decimated. Peers estimates that “between half and three-quarters of the Ojibwa living west and north of Grand Portage [Lake Superior] perished between 1780 and 1783.”⁹⁶ However, there was a limit to the spread of the disease amongst the Ojibwa. It does not appear to have extended northeast and south of Lake Superior to some of the more densely-populated Ojibwa territory.⁹⁷ According to Hackett, it was precisely this “differential impact” that led to “perhaps the most fundamental change” of all, “the movement of Ojibway people into the Red River Valley.” Hackett argues that the bulk of these new Ojibwa, and to a lesser degree Ottawa immigrants to Red River came from areas relatively “untouched by the epidemic.”⁹⁸

The impact of the disease at Red River is difficult to over-estimate, and has a direct bearing on the origins, geographical location, and subsequent prosperity of the St. Peter’s “Indian settlement.” According to the nineteenth-century Ojibway historian William Warren, a “great Ke-nis-te-no [Cree] town” at what is now called Netley Creek was completely wiped out in 1781-82, leading to this important tributary of the Red River being re-named *Ne-bo-se-be* (the Dead River).⁹⁹ Ojibwa Indians, long familiar with the

⁹⁴ Paul Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness: Epidemics in the Petit Nord, 1670 to 1846*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002, p. 118.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93-94; Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 19.

⁹⁶ Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 20; Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, p. 93.

⁹⁷ Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, p. 109.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁹⁹ Warren does not give precise dates, they are inferred by Peers and Hackett. See William Warren, *History of the Ojibway Nation*. Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, 1957,

population centre as a seasonal meeting site for both trade and war preparations with their Cree and Assiniboine allies, may share some unwitting responsibility for the village's destruction, and indeed for introducing this wave of smallpox to the Red River valley in the first place. According to Hackett (following Warren), it was a combined war party of Cree, Assiniboine, and Ojibwa that brought smallpox back from a raid against the already-infected Hidatsa of the Upper Missouri River region.¹⁰⁰ The resultant destruction was total at Netley Creek, where the disease completely depopulated the Cree town.¹⁰¹ It was also near-apocalyptic elsewhere in the vicinity, with mass graves being filled at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers – at least until, in Hackett's words, "the dead overwhelmed the living" and there was no longer anyone left to bury the bodies.¹⁰²

The smallpox epidemic that ravaged the Red River valley in 1781-82 was not the first appearance of this disease in the region, nor would it be the last.¹⁰³ But it led directly to a temporary disappearance of the Cree from the area, or enough of an opening to allow the Saulteaux, Ottawa, and arguably Europeans as well, to permanently fill the vacuum. There is evidence that Cree and Assiniboine survivors invited the Ojibwa and Ottawa to settle in the region, in part as a protection against their mutual enemies the Dakota, and that these bands may have amalgamated together out of necessity in the wake of the epidemic's destruction. Some colonizers, such as Donald Gunn, later argued

original publication 1885, p. 140, 261; Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 19; Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, p. 106.

¹⁰⁰ Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, p. 105-06.

¹⁰¹ Warren, *History of the Ojibway Nation*, p. 261.

¹⁰² Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, p. 107.

¹⁰³ Smallpox devastated the Red River and Lake Winnipeg area in 1737-38, and hit again periodically up to about 1819, when the HBC began a systematic vaccination program at Red River. According to Hackett, after the 1837-38 epidemic, the HBC attempted to vaccinate "every Aboriginal person within range of its posts." Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness*, p. 67-68, 157.

that this “invitation to a joint occupancy of land confers a good title” upon the Saulteaux, without their “being born” in the region.¹⁰⁴ In any case, some of the Saulteaux who migrated to the Red River valley simply re-occupied the deserted villages, or assumed control over the favoured hunting grounds, fishing sites, and croplands of their Cree predecessors. In essence, they were *re-settling* a widowed land, rather than settling true wilderness – in some respects similar to the “re-settlement” that European colonizers had relied upon, and indeed grown accustomed to since the founding of Jamestown and Quebec City in the early 17th century, and which contributed to the myth of the empty wilderness (*terra nullius*).¹⁰⁵

Thus, it was not simply by chance that some Saulteaux and Ottawa Indians settled upon Netley Creek. The very region that became an integral part of the St. Peter’s “Indian settlement,” parish, and reserve (an area broadly construed from the area of Lockport and Lower Fort Garry in the south to Netley Creek and the southern edge of Lake Winnipeg) had been a site of indigenous agriculture for at least 400 years *before* the arrival of the Selkirk settlers of 1812.¹⁰⁶ The Ottawa and Ojibwa, already familiar with the cultivation of crops such as corn, potatoes, and pumpkins,¹⁰⁷ and familiar with the Cree of Netley Creek, could not have chosen a more attractive piece of real estate. Not only

¹⁰⁴ Donald Gunn, “Peguis Vindicated,” *Nor’Wester*, 28 April 1860, p. 4; also Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁵ For arguments and examples of this from New England to British Columbia, see Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1993; and Harris, *Resettlement of British Columbia*.

¹⁰⁶ Liz Bryan, *The Buffalo People: Pre-Contact Archaeology on the Canadian Plains*. Surrey, BC: Heritage House Publishing, 2005; D.W. Moodie & Barry Kaye, “The Northern Limit of Indian Agriculture in North America,” *Geographical Review* 59, No. 4 (1969); Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁷ Warren, *History of the Ojibway Nation*, p. 97, 299; Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 70.

was it a territory close to key rivers and waterways for regional travel, but it was also rich in game, marshlands for waterfowl, close to major fishing sites (for the abundant whitefish and sturgeon), and had some of the best soil and agricultural potential. It was also a location with easy access to trading posts of both the Hudson's Bay Company and its early rival the Northwest Company.

The devastation wrought by the smallpox epidemic of 1781-82 had other consequences as well that bear on the origins and composition of the people who came to be called the "St. Peter's Indians." Out of sheer necessity, survivors of the epidemic were forced to cooperate, and indeed amalgamate, regardless of clan, cultural, or ethnic affiliation. According to Peers, multi-ethnic amalgamation "allowed survivors to continue using familiar group-hunting techniques and to defend their territories against enemies," and is a probable explanation for the mixed Ojibwa-Ottawa, and later Ojibwa-Cree-Assiniboine bands that became commonplace in the prairies and Canadian northwest.¹⁰⁸ Those Indians who re-settled Cree territory along the lower Red River valley, and in particular at Netley Creek, were a mixed group of Saulteaux and Ottawa, with possibly small numbers of Cree and Assiniboine survivors. Soon after their arrival, the Saulteaux Chief Peguis rose to prominence, and remained the most influential leader of what became a mixed Saulteaux-Cree people along the lower Red River for the better part of the nineteenth century.

Much of the literature on the origins of the St. Peter's Indians and "Indian settlement" attributes the very existence of this stable Indian community, and its engagement with agriculture, to the efforts of Christian missionaries. T.C. Boon and

¹⁰⁸ Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 20-21.

Michael Czuboka, for example, assume that the St. Peter's Indians owed their origins, and "successes" as both Christian converts and farmers, to the efforts of individuals such as the Reverend William Cockran. Cockran had founded the St. Peter's mission church in 1836, on the east bank of the Red River, and it was after this church that the St. Peter's Parish was named. Over time, all the Indians of the general vicinity north of Lower Fort Garry came to be called "St. Peter's Indians." However, W.L. Morton stated that Cockran had established the church and parish "to serve the Saulteaux converts of Peguis' band [already] settled at Netley Creek." In his view, the St. Peter's Indians had settled along the banks of the Red River, and were thriving agriculturalists, well before Cockran's mission church, and indeed before the visit of Hudson's Bay Company employee Nicholas Garry in 1821. According to Peers, Ojibwa-Ottawa "gardens" were first reported by Europeans at Netley Creek in 1805, and – contrary to the standard myth of "improvident" Indians – these indigenous farmers were producing sufficient surplus to sell large quantities of corn to the Selkirk colonists after 1812.¹⁰⁹ Angela Jeske, while challenging the notion that the St. Peter's "Indian settlement" owed its existence and longevity solely to the missionaries, nevertheless viewed the diverse occupational activities of the St. Peter's Indians as an expression of "House Indian economic behaviour," a set of rational but historically-persistent economic and cultural practices which ostensibly derived from Indians "attaching" themselves to fur trade posts.¹¹⁰

Some of the confusion and conflicting interpretations over the origins, composition, and daily life of the St. Peter's Indians can be attributed to the fact that few

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 70-72.

¹¹⁰ Jeske was applying an existing behavioral model ("House Indian") developed by John Foster, and derived from an earlier "Home Guard" model, to the St. Peter's Indian settlement. See Jeske, "St. Peter's Indian Settlement," p. 9, 88-89.

sources define what they mean by this “Indian settlement,” and in some cases use different spatial and cultural meanings themselves. Angela Jeske, for example, appears to define the St. Peter’s “Indian settlement” as a particular Cree-Saulteaux village established at Cook’s Creek in the 1830s.¹¹¹ At other times, however, Jeske writes more expansively of a Saulteaux “Indian reserve” north of Sugar Point, acknowledged as such since “[Lord] Selkirk’s time,” and she draws upon numerous examples related to Netley Creek in the north.¹¹² The terms “Indian settlement,” “Indian reserve,” “St. Peter’s Parish,” and “St. Peter’s Reserve” have been used interchangeably in some accounts, and where defined with greater specificity, the result has sometimes been greater confusion, rather than greater clarity. As Jeske herself notes, at least as early as the Selkirk Treaty of 1817, an expansive territory from Sugar Point to Lake Winnipeg had been understood by European colonizers to be an “Indian reserve.” Yet many historians have simultaneously accepted the notion that a formal reserve only came into being as a consequence of Treaty 1 in 1871, and it is only the Dominion-recognized boundaries of this land that constituted the St. Peter’s Reserve. According to this view, the loss of the St. Peter’s Reserve by means of the surrender of 1907 was simply a loss of whatever acreage had been recognized and surveyed as such by the colonial regime after 1871.

Each of these distinct meanings is useful for certain purposes, but without careful delineation and consistent application can obscure facts of historical significance. Focus on a particular “model village” spear-headed by European missionaries, such as Cockran’s farming experiment at Cook’s Creek, as the definition and limit of St. Peter’s,

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 1, 25. “Cook’s Creek” refers to a small tributary that joins the Red River north of Sugar Point (in what became known as St. Peter’s Parish).

¹¹² Ibid., p. 22-24, 78.

may yield important details about Aboriginal-missionary relations at Red River, but all too often obscures the fact that native peoples had long favoured the region, and the Saulteaux themselves had engaged in agriculture of a different kind. Exclusive attention to the St. Peter's reserve as a territory of a certain size surrendered in 1907, not only obscures the early history of Peguis's people and their relationship to the wider district, but also obscures the fact that as much as half (and arguably much more than half) of the land that had once been recognized as "Indian reserve," going back to the Selkirk settlement of 1812, had already been lost by the twentieth-century. It is clear that a lack of specificity and certainty over the meaning and boundaries of Indian lands and "reserves," and arguably a willful ambiguity on the part of colonizers, was conducive to the Indians' dispossession in practice. Carried over into the realm of history-writing, this ambiguity – coupled with the typically narrow periodization of the history profession – has continued to mask the extent of this dispossession. Finally, regardless of the spatial meaning given to "St. Peter's Indian land," preoccupation in all cases with agricultural development and crop yield can obscure the fact that a people's rights and sovereignty in their own territory ought not to be contingent upon a particular form of land use. European colonizers rarely lived up to their own ideals of "productive" land use, but even if they had, such ideals are culturally-shaped, and in any case, do not override the national and collective rights of distinct peoples.

For the purposes of this study, it is important to keep at least four geographical spaces in mind as distinct, in order to grasp the nature and extent of historical dispossession: 1) the original "Indian reserve" of Peguis's people as understood both by the Indians themselves and recognized by the Selkirk settlers of 1812-17; 2) the St.

Peter's Parish; 3) the St. Peter's Reserve (I.R. No. 1) as indicated by Treaty 1; and 4) the St. Peter's Reserve (a later iteration of I.R. No. 1) as "surrendered" between 1907 and 1916. Each of these will be discussed in more detail below, as a short-hand means to flesh out the history of the dispossession of the St. Peter's Indians to 1907. In the process, the narrative will touch on the Selkirk Treaty of 1817 and the Stone Fort Treaty of 1871, insofar as these relate to the St. Peter's Indians. It will also discuss the economic and settler-colonial context and the underlying forces driving what Sarah Carter has called the "social and spatial segregation" of peoples – a British imperial imperative that propelled policies as diverse as the imposition of draconian marriage and monogamy laws on Aboriginal peoples, as well as "Indian removals," or what I argue ought to be acknowledged as "ethnic cleansing."¹¹³ Throughout the course of this narrative, it is crucial to bear in mind the distinction between these four geographical spaces, because each of them has been used at one time or another, often interchangeably, in reference to the homeland of Peguis's people. In essence, they are spatial and temporal markers of an historical dispossession that Canadian historiography has failed adequately to emphasize.

The first and largest of these geographical spaces is the original "Indian reserve" from Sugar Point to Lake Winnipeg on both sides of the Red River, recognized as the exclusive domain of Peguis's largely-Saulteaux people by Europeans since at least the Selkirk Treaty of 1817.¹¹⁴ While it is clear that Red River Ojibwa as a whole claimed

¹¹³ Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ The term "reserve" would be better applied to the small strip of land that Selkirk negotiated on behalf of his agricultural settlement, given that it was indigenous peoples, including Peguis's Saulteaux, who were the acknowledged lords and owners of the wider

and exercised access and resource rights to a much wider territory, for hunting, trapping, fishing, and other purposes, the land and waterways of this stretch of the lower Red River were understood to be the favoured domain of Peguis's people. Much of the literature describing the 1817 treaty describes it as an unequivocal land sale, whereby the Cree and Saulteaux ceded all the river-front lands of what became the core "settlement belt" of the Red and Assiniboine river valleys. According to this view, Selkirk purchased up to two miles on each side of the Assiniboine from its mouth to Musk Rat River (or Riviere des Champignons) west of present day Portage la Prairie. On the Red River, Selkirk is said to have purchased two miles on each side, from the mouth at Lake Winnipeg, all the way south to where Red Lake drained into the Red River, at present-day Grand Forks, North Dakota. In addition to this, at Fort Douglas (roughly located where Waterfront Drive hits Point Douglas in present-day Winnipeg) the sale was said to extend up to six miles "on every side," arguably a six mile radius around the fort.¹¹⁵ The literature does not ask why a land sale would have been necessary at all if the HBC "grant" to Lord Selkirk six years earlier had had a shred of validity.

Peguis's Saulteaux were not the only Aboriginal participants in the 1817 treaty, and there were Cree leaders who objected to Saulteaux involvement, either because the Saulteaux were recent immigrants, and as such had no right to negotiate over lands that were not theirs, or because the Cree wanted a kind of "favoured nation" status with the European colony. Perhaps it was both. One observer stated that the Cree threatened "to

territory. In other words, the Selkirk Treaty of 1817 secured a kind of "European reserve" of river-front property, more than it delineated an "Indian reserve" for Peguis's people.

¹¹⁵ Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 26; Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 92-93; full text of the Selkirk Treaty is in Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders: Volume I*, p. 285-86, and also reprinted in Sutherland, *Peguis*, p. 63-64.

expel their [Saulteaux] rivals from RR [Red River] altogether, and the Whites along with them, unless the names of the Ojibwa chiefs are expunged from the compact, and the annual payment be made to the Crées only.”¹¹⁶ According to Laura Peers, the potentially volatile situation was only resolved through negotiation and “some persuasion by Peguis” himself.¹¹⁷ However, there is some evidence that the Cree had consented to Saulteaux participation in advance of the treaty. Lieutenant-Colonel William Coltman, who originally had been dispatched to Red River to investigate the causes of the Seven Oaks “incident” of 1816, ended up acting as a liaison between Lord Selkirk and local Indian leaders, and played a critical role in the treaty negotiations themselves. According to Coltman, not only did the Crees grant the Saulteaux rights to treat over a limited territory, but the Saulteaux were, in his estimation, far more “disposed towards the Sales [of lands]” than the Cree.¹¹⁸ This predisposition on the part of the Saulteaux was perhaps a reflection of their own precarious position as relative newcomers, and may in part explain the strong relations that developed between the colony and Peguis’s people. However, the perceived benefits were not simply one-way: Coltman warned Selkirk that “the interests of the colony would require the Indian’s friendship,” as the European settlement was itself vulnerable with respect to Cree, Métis, and rival Northwest Company interests.¹¹⁹

Much of the early historical literature presented the Selkirk Treaty as a straight-forward land sale. W.L. Morton, for example, assumed that Indian title had been “extinguished” along the river-front settlement belt by the 1817 treaty – though he noted

¹¹⁶ Cited in Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 93.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

¹¹⁸ Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 21-25.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24-25.

that Peguis later repudiated this assumption.¹²⁰ More recent scholarship has suggested that the treaty may be understood more accurately as an agreement to “share” the land, though it is not clear that the Europeans and indigenous peoples were agreeing to the same terms.¹²¹ The written text of the 1817 treaty is itself contradictory and ambiguous. It states that “the undersigned Chiefs and Warriors of the Chippeaway or Sautaux Nation, and the Killistine or Cree Nation ... do by these presents give grant and confirm unto our Sovereign Lord the King, all that tract of land adjacent to Red River and Assiniboyne River ... to have and to hold forever” according to the terms delineated. The words “to have and to hold forever” may have been added later, without the knowledge of the Indians: according to Ray, Miller and Tough, they do not appear in the original manuscript copy. But in any case, the treaty text also used the term “quit-rent” to refer to the annual payment or “presents” of “one hundred pounds weight of tobacco” that both the Cree and Saulteaux were to receive.¹²² Under Scottish and English land laws of the day, Selkirk’s “quit-rent” was a rent paid to an acknowledged “lord,” typically in exchange for rights to use the lord’s lands, and sometimes as a release from other feudal obligations, such as military service.¹²³ It was not a sale of land, let alone a cession of sovereignty. It was a payment of currency or goods, usually ongoing, that granted the

¹²⁰ Morton, *Manitoba*, p. 105, 154.

¹²¹ Carter, *Aboriginal Peoples and Colonizers*, p. 67; Laura Peers and Ray, Miller, and Tough present a more ambivalent picture, suggesting in some cases that the 1817 treaty was a simple “sale” that extinguished Indian title to the lands delineated, and in others that it was an agreement to share or rent the land. See Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 92-94, 126; Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 30-31.

¹²² Sutherland, *Peguis*, p. 63-65; Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders*, p. 285-86.

¹²³ See the entries for “Quit rent” and “Rent” (including the latter’s sub-heading on “Quit-rent”) in Henry Campbell Black, *Black’s Law Dictionary: Definitions of the Terms and Phrases of American and English Jurisprudence, Ancient and Modern*. St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1979, 5th edition, original publication 1891, p. 1126, 1166.

tenant use-rights. Seen in this light, the Selkirk treaty can be interpreted as a kind of tenancy lease, notwithstanding the claims of colonizers to have bought the land outright. It is important to point out, however, that even if one supposes that the two-mile strip of river land was “bought” by means of this treaty, as opposed to simply rented, the sovereign rights of the Cree and Saulteaux to *all* of southern Manitoba were in no way diminished.

Leaving aside the motivations of the respective parties to the negotiations, and the question of whether or not the treaty constituted a sale or rental agreement, the Selkirk Treaty offers us a geographical baseline for understanding the extent of the subsequent dispossession of the St. Peter’s Indians. According to the standard interpretation, soon after the written text of the treaty was signed, Peguis’s people realized that the formal treaty terms would have barred them from the lands they had occupied since the late-eighteenth century, and blocked them from access to the Red River itself. A delegation was sent immediately to raise these concerns with Selkirk, who is said to have magnanimously “granted to Peguis for his people [all] the land from Sugar Point Northward to Lake Winnipeg.”¹²⁴ In essence, Canadian historiography has turned the facts upside down. Rather than stating the obvious – that the indigenous owners of the land were willing to grant Selkirk a *European* reserve on which to establish an agricultural colony – Canadian scholars have instead promulgated the colonial fiction that Selkirk’s “generosity” accounts for the origins of the misnamed “Indian reserve.”

Arguably, the western and eastern boundaries of this expansive Indian territory were never specified because European colonizers were supposed to be barred from

¹²⁴ Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 29.

settlement beyond a two-mile limit along most of the length of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. In other words, *all of the land* was initially recognized to be Indian land beyond this limit, and arguably even including the narrow strip that Selkirk bought or rented from the Saulteaux and Cree Nations. The western and eastern limits of Peguis's original "Indian reserve" were therefore determined not by negotiation with European colonizers (who, pretensions aside, had no power to "grant" it), but rather by mutual agreement between the Saulteaux, Cree, and Assiniboine Indians, who were, in practice, the "absolute lords and proprietors" of all the lands of southern Manitoba in the days of Lord Selkirk.

The second geographical space to keep in mind is what European colonizers began to call the "St. Peter's Parish" in the mid-nineteenth century, a religious and community district that extended the Red River parish system into territory hitherto regarded as "Indian reserve." The St. Peter's Parish, named after the St. Peter's Church built by missionaries in 1836 to gain and serve Indian converts throughout the area, was a small fraction of the previously-acknowledged "Indian reserve." Like most of the other colonial parishes, the St. Peter's Parish was a narrow strip along the Red River, in this case a rough parallelogram, extending from the region of Sugar Point about half-way to Lake Winnipeg. Its northern limit was south of the point where Netley Creek emptied into the Red River, and this river juncture was itself south of Lake Winnipeg. The St. Peter's Parish was divided into narrow river lots, similar to other Red River parishes, as indicated by a Dominion Lands Office survey conducted by A.H. Vaughan in 1874.¹²⁵ The total acreage of these river lots amounted to only 17,331 acres, far short of the total

¹²⁵ A copy of this can be seen in Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*, p. 147.

size of what became known as the St. Peter's Reserve (I.R. No. 1) after 1871, and an even smaller fraction of what had once been recognized as "Indian reserve" in Selkirk's day. Furthermore, even though these river-front lands had long been recognized as a *part* of a wider "Indian reserve" since Selkirk's day, it was this small parish, with its Anglican church and associated mission village at Cook's Creek, that came to have its name associated with *all* the Indians north of Sugar Point – whether they were part of Peguis's Saulteaux at Netley Creek north of the parish, the Muskego (Swampy) Cree at Cook's Creek within it, mixed Ojibwa-Cree kin throughout, or other kin who were dubbed "half-breeds" or "Métis" on the basis of mixed ancestry, rather than on the basis of self-identification.

The St. Peter's parish is important to keep in mind for several reasons. First, the St. Peter's Indians have sometimes been equated with, and reduced to, the mixed Ojibwa-Cree and Métis inhabitants of this parish, in part because authors such as Angela Jeske have defined the St. Peter's "Indian settlement" as simply the agricultural mission village at Cook's Creek within its boundary. This community was established through the joint efforts of both William Cockran and Chief Peguis, and Peguis himself relocated to it from Netley Creek. Peguis's consent to and involvement in the parish, his personal efforts to engage in the *type* of agriculture deemed significant by Cockran, his conversion to Christianity, and his attendance at the St. Peter's Church, have no doubt played a role in the subsequent association, and blurring of lines, between Peguis's Saulteaux and the parish itself. However, apart from Peguis himself, few Saulteaux actually converted to Christianity, earning them derision from missionaries for their "backwardness" and the

alleged machinations of their “conjurers.”¹²⁶ In other words, whether or not they lived inside the designated parish, and whether or not they had converted to Christianity and attended the St. Peter’s church, all the Indians of the region came to be labeled “St. Peter’s Indians” as a consequence of this colonial naming.

Second, the St. Peter’s Parish is significant because of the alternate form of land tenure that developed within it, and the central role this seems to have played in the eventual dispossession of the Indians and dissolution of the last vestiges of the reserve. The river lots of the parish were divided into private landholdings, and held by individual Indians and families in a kind of fee simple, with title and deeds originally deriving from Peguis himself. However, the majority of land within the original expansive reserve was held by the people in common. Under the terms negotiated at the later 1871 “Stone Fort” treaty, these two different forms of Indian land tenure were initially recognized.¹²⁷ The river lots of the small St. Peter’s Parish were recognized as private property held by individual Indians, separate and distinct from the collective rights of the Indians as a people. These and other private landholdings by St. Peter’s Indians were never meant to be included in the calculation of “entitlement” for collectively-held reserve lands under Treaty 1, a fact affirmed by Treaty 1 negotiator Wemyss Simpson, as well as Molyneux St. John, another witness to the negotiations.¹²⁸ Controversy over the validity of title to some of these river-front lots, as well as the colonial government’s decision to later deny

¹²⁶ See Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 135-37.

¹²⁷ This recognition that Indians could hold private property as individuals, and also have collective property as a people, was not spelled out in the text of Treaty 1. However, it was subsequently affirmed as an agreed-upon part of the negotiated settlement by both Indian and Dominion participants in the treaty. See Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 4-5.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

Indians a right to retain both collective treaty rights and individual property rights under the auspices of the Indian Act – which was itself a violation of Treaty 1 – played a crucial role in the dissolution of the St. Peter's Reserve after 1907.

The third distinct geographical domain to bear in mind is the territory first surveyed as the formal “St. Peter's Reserve” (Indian Reserve No. 1) by Dominion officials after Treaty 1. The “Stone Fort” Treaty (Treaty 1) was the first formal treaty negotiated and signed after Canadian Confederation.¹²⁹ The treaty gathering itself was a monumental affair, as upwards of one thousand Cree and Saulteaux Indians gathered outside the walls of Lower Fort Garry (then an HBC post) in late-July and early August 1871, to meet with representatives of the British Crown and the Dominion government.¹³⁰ One of the key native leaders present was Miskookenew (Red Eagle), or Henry Prince, a son of the late Chief Peguis, who had become the recognized chief of the St. Peter's Indians after his father's death. Countless Euro-Canadian and Métis observers were also present, including journalists with the local newspapers sent to cover the proceedings. Adams Archibald, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, was the ranking official in the European delegation, and made the opening

¹²⁹ See Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 58-86 for general details, as well as D.J. Hall, “A Serene Atmosphere? Treaty 1 Revisited,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* IV, 2 (1984): 321-358; Jean Friesen, “Grant Me Wherewith to Make My Living,” originally published for the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Centre (TARR) in 1985, and later modified for inclusion in Kerry Abel and Jean Friesen (eds.), *Aboriginal Resource Use in Canada* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1991): 141-56; and W.E. Daugherty, “Treaty One and Treaty Two,” in *Treaties and Historical Research Centre (Canada), Treaty Research Reports*. Ottawa: Treaties and Historical Research Centre, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1987-1999, 2 volumes. For the complete treaty text and additional commentary by a pivotal colonial official, see Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-west Territories*. 1880 Reprint. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1991.

¹³⁰ Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 65.

address, although a good deal of the negotiations over the course of the week was conducted by Indian Commissioner Wemyss Simpson. James McKay, a Métis member of the Executive Council of Manitoba, was also present as both interpreter and unofficial negotiator, and as with later treaties, may have played a critical role in the course and outcome of the proceedings. Colonial troops were also stationed there, in part to prevent the sale of liquor to the Indians, but also because in the words of Archibald: "Military display has always a great effect on savages, and the presence, even of a few troops, will have a good tendency."¹³¹

Treaty 1 is crucial to understanding the history of the St. Peter's Indians, and their slow segregation and dispossession over time. But the dissolution of the St. Peter's Reserve after 1907 is likewise crucial to any understanding of the implementation of Treaty 1. The two have rarely been discussed in detail, either separately or together, in the extant historical literature. Since the 1980s, a growing interest in treaty history, analysis, and land claims litigation in Canada, has led to an explosion of both scholarly and non-academic literature across disciplines (including history, native studies, political studies, law, and ethnography). Significant in this new effort at re-assessing the history, meaning, and intent of treaty-making in Canada have been a handful of historical works on specific treaty areas, that have attempted to incorporate both documentary and oral evidence.¹³² In comparison to the later treaties negotiated in Alberta and Saskatchewan,

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 66.

¹³² Salient in this regard have been Richard T. Price (ed.), *The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1999, 3rd edition; Treaty 7 Elders et.al., *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996; Arthur Ray et.al., *Bounty and Benevolence*; as well as Harold Cardinal & Walter Hildebrandt, *Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000.

however, relatively little in-depth historical work has been done on the treaties of Manitoba, including the 1871 “Stone Fort Treaty,” which was the first of the post-Confederation treaties (typically referred to as “Treaty 1”). In fact, almost all general histories of Canada and the Prairies, First Nations histories, and contemporary analyses of land claims and treaty rights in southern Manitoba rely overwhelmingly on three main sources for their interpretation of Treaty 1. The first of these sources is a published primary work, written and compiled by Alexander Morris, the second lieutenant-governor of Manitoba, who was also a government negotiator and signatory to Treaties 3 through 6.¹³³ The second and third major sources are two pioneering, yet preliminary articles by D.J. Hall and Jean Friesen, which attempt to provide some crucial background context to the treaty negotiations, incorporate some Aboriginal oral testimony, and touch on aspects of the early implementation period.¹³⁴

However, despite its importance as the first treaty after Confederation, its pivotal role in the “settlement” of the West, and its potential significance in terms of ongoing legal battles, no comprehensive history and synthesis of Treaty 1 has been published. Furthermore, little work has been done on the implementation period *after* 1871, either on a reserve-by-reserve basis, or in terms of tracking specific treaty rights (such as hunting, fishing, education, or agricultural aid and training), let alone in terms of a general overview pertaining to the lands and peoples affected by Treaty 1.¹³⁵

¹³³ Morris, *The Treaties of Canada*.

¹³⁴ The first of these articles is Hall, “A Serene Atmosphere?” Treaty 1 Revisited.” The second is Friesen’s “Grant Me Wherewith to Make My Living.”

¹³⁵ Apart from Jean Friesen’s 1985 study, Kent McNeil’s work on hunting and fishing rights in Manitoba and the prairies, and a few scattered articles on aspects of land entitlement and treaty rights, there is very little historical scholarship on Manitoba’s treaties as a whole, let alone Treaty 1 in particular. See Kent McNeil, *Indian Hunting*,

Unlike the later treaties, the written text of Treaties 1 and 2 specified the actual locations and rough boundaries of reserve sites for specific chiefs and bands. Later treaties promised reserves in places ostensibly “advantageous” to Indians, and of their own choosing, but Indian agents had an ultimate veto – and as became clear in the case of the Plains Cree during the 1880s, the Dominion blocked any efforts on the part of Indian bands to choose contiguous reserve lands that might establish large “Indian territories,” hinder white settlement, or pose what they considered to be a military threat.¹³⁶ Before discussing St. Peter’s in detail, however, it is important to point out that despite the written guarantee defining reserve sites and boundaries in Treaty 1, Indian reserves were not always located where initially agreed, did not always live up to the geographical size suggested, and systematic efforts were made on the part of Indian Affairs officials to push Indian bands and reserves away from the coveted (white) “settlement belt,” particularly if specified Indian reserves had frontage on the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. Yellow Quill’s Band, for example, did not get the reserve they requested near present-day Portage La Prairie, and their reserve was instead placed thirty miles southwest, away from the Assiniboine River, at Swan Lake.¹³⁷

Trapping and Fishing Rights in the Prairie Provinces of Canada. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, Native Law Centre, 1983; Pat Sawchuk, “Manitoba Treaty Land Entitlement,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* Vol.3, No.1 (1983); M.W. Wagner, “Domestic Hunting and Fishing by Manitoba Indians: Magnitude, Composition, and Implications for Management,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* Vol.6, No.2 (1986); Michael C. Koppang, “Manitoba Aboriginal Treaties as Vehicles for Self-Government,” Thesis (LL.M): University of Manitoba, 1997; and Daugherty, “Treaty One and Treaty Two.”

¹³⁶ John L. Tobias, “Canada’s Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885,” *Canadian Historical Review* (Vol. LXIV, No. 4, 1983).

¹³⁷ Robert Miller, “The Indian Reserve System in Manitoba, 1870-1900.” Thesis (Master of Development Studies): The Hague, Netherlands, Institute of Social Studies, 1981, p. 74.

It is clear that the spirit and meaning of Treaty 1, as with all of the numbered treaties, is very different from the written text. It is also evident that the Cree and Saulteaux were not passive victims. They fought hard to ensure that a formal treaty was negotiated in the first place, and once they managed to bring British and Canadian officials to the table, they worked to build in as many guarantees for their future as possible.¹³⁸ Yet the treaty text itself reads like a capitulation. It demands of the “Chippewa and Swampy Cree” that they “cede, release, surrender, and yield up ... for ever, all the lands [of southern Manitoba],” an area of more than 43,000 square kilometers, with the ostensible exception of certain small “reserves” as delineated in the text.¹³⁹ In other words, from the Dominion perspective, the Indians were expected to give up their rights and sovereignty over the vast majority of their country, a territory larger than many economically and politically viable nation-states today.¹⁴⁰

The text of Treaty 1 promised the St. Peter’s Indians a reserve delineated as follows: “so much of land on both sides of the Red River, beginning at the south line of St. Peter’s Parish, as will furnish one hundred and sixty acres for each family of five, or in that proportion for larger or smaller families.”¹⁴¹ The brevity and ambiguity of this description is significant for several reasons. First, per capita acreage entails a massive cut in lands originally recognized as St. Peter’s territory going back to 1817. Second, the written text did not provide for population growth, perhaps because a prevailing colonial perspective of the day pre-supposed the eventual disappearance of indigenous peoples

¹³⁸ Friesen, “Grant Me,” p. 25-33, 69-76; as well as Hall, “A Serene Atmosphere?,” p. 322-32; and Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 58-86.

¹³⁹ Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, p. 314.

¹⁴⁰ Switzerland and Belgium, for example, are both smaller than the area “ceded” under Treaty 1.

¹⁴¹ Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders*, Vol. 1, p. 283.

altogether.¹⁴² Aboriginal negotiators at the treaty recognized per capita acreage provision as a problematic issue, and were assured in verbal promises that Indian reserve lands and acreage would expand with their population. But such guarantees never made it into the text of the treaty. It is also important to note that the St. Peter's Parish mentioned in the text was a colonizer-defined boundary that originally included land as far south as, and fully encompassing, Sugar Point. St. Peter's Parish surveys were later unilaterally revised to *exclude* Sugar Point. The significance of this for Treaty 1's implementation has not been adequately addressed.

Beyond the question of boundaries, the issue of protecting Indian reserve lands from settler encroachment – guaranteed under Treaty 1 – was deemed sufficiently critical to incorporate into both the verbal negotiations and written text of the treaty. Treaty 1 promised that the St. Peter's Reserve, and other delineated reserves,¹⁴³ would be “for the sole and exclusive use of the Indians,” and specified in spirit, if not in detail, how European “settlers” who might squat or encroach upon Indian reserve lands would be dealt with. The written text reserved for “Her Majesty,” acting through the Dominion, “the right to deal with such settlers *as She shall deem just*, so as not to diminish the extent of land allotted to the Indians.”¹⁴⁴ Verbal promises made during the treaty negotiations were of a similar vein. Lieutenant-Governor Archibald, as the Queen's representative on the ground, assured the gathered Indians in no uncertain terms:

¹⁴² In fact, so-called “experts” on Aboriginal peoples, such as Diamond Jenness, asserted that indigenous peoples in Canada were a vanishing people as late as the 1930s.

¹⁴³ The others delineated in Treaty 1's text included Roseau River, Winnipeg River (Fort Alexander), and Yellow Quill's Band on the Assiniboine near Portage.

¹⁴⁴ Morris, *Treaties of Canada*, p.315. Emphasis added. Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders*, Vol. 1, p. 283.

Your Great Mother, therefore, will lay aside for you lots of land, to be used by you and your children forever. She will not allow the white man to intrude upon these lots. She will make rules to keep them for you, so that as long as the Sun shall shine, there shall be no Indian who has not a place that he can call his home, where he can go and pitch his camp, or, if he chooses, build his house and till his land.¹⁴⁵

In other words, in both the written text and in verbal promises that together capture something of the spirit and meaning of Treaty 1, the honour and justice of the Crown were pre-supposed and explicitly asserted. More than this, there was the *implication* that in any subsequent conflict between Indians and colonizers over “reserve” lands, settler encroachment would be prevented, and the Indian rights to maintain their communal lands would be upheld.

In addition to the protection of Indian reserve lands, the text of Treaty 1 also promised that “Her Majesty” would build and maintain a school on each reserve “whenever the Indians of the reserve should desire it,” that the sale of liquor would be barred on reserves, and stated that an annual payment (annuity) of three dollars per man, woman, and child would be paid, in return for the Indians’ acceptance of the treaty as a whole.¹⁴⁶ The written text spelled out obligations for indigenous peoples above and beyond surrendering the bulk of their lands in southern Manitoba. Accordingly, the signatories were to “bind and pledge themselves and their people ... to maintain perpetual peace ... and not to interfere with the property or in any way molest the persons of Her Majesty’s white or other subjects.”¹⁴⁷ A series of verbal promises were also made at the treaty negotiations but were not included in the written text, and the disconnect between what was promised and what the Dominion was prepared to actually implement,

¹⁴⁵ Archibald cited in Tough, “*As Their Natural Resources Fail*,” p. 172.

¹⁴⁶ Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders*, Vol. 1, p. 284.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

led almost immediately to Indian petitions and grievances after 1871. Four years after signing Treaty 1, the colonial government agreed to raise the annuity from \$3 to \$5 per person per annum, with extra bonuses of cash and clothing for “Chiefs” and “Headmen,” an amendment that brought Treaties 1 and 2 into greater accord with the terms of subsequent treaties. The stated rationale for these increases was “out of good feelings to the Indians, and as a matter of benevolence,” though the Dominion also stated that in return for this “benevolence,” the Indians must “abandon all claim whatever against the Government in connection with the so-called ‘outside promises’.”¹⁴⁸ In essence, it was an end-of-conflict clause that attempted to get Aboriginal leaders and representatives to stop pointing out the myriad ways in which the Dominion was *already* in breach of the spirit of the treaty.

It is important to emphasize that the boundaries of I.R. No. 1 as surveyed after 1871 were substantially larger than, and included the entirety of what had been called the “St. Peter’s Parish,” even though this was itself a violation of the terms agreed upon at Treaty 1, because private lots held by individual Indians were never meant to be included in the collectively-held reserve.¹⁴⁹ It is also important to point out that the total acreage allocated to I.R. 1 according to the first Vaughan survey of 1873-74 was only 55,246 acres, even though the text of Treaty 1 itself would have required at least 60,000 acres of communal reserve land for an estimated Band population of 1,875 – on top of any private

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 286-290.

¹⁴⁹ Frank Tough’s book *As Their Natural Resources Fail* contains copies of the St. Peter’s Parish river lot survey (p. 147) and the St. Peter’s Reserve survey (p. 153), which visually demonstrate that the former was incorporated into the latter.

property (such as the river lots of St. Peter's Parish) held by Indians as individuals.¹⁵⁰ This reserve size itself assumes for the moment that treaty annuity paylists are a reliable source for determining St. Peter's Indian band population in the 1871-73 period, the first years of recording the data and issuing payments. For starters, paylists during this period must be viewed as preliminary. In actuality, the total number of names for "heads of household" listed as receiving payment increased dramatically in the first few years, from 273 for the first annuity payment in 1871, to 429 for the third payment in 1872, and so on. Second, despite the economic and political incentives that may have driven Aboriginal people to participate in treaty payments, there may nevertheless have been cases of deliberate refusal to collect annuities. Even if we accept the paylists as a guide to St. Peter's population size, and accept the text of Treaty 1 as the whole basis for determining reserve size, it is clear that the reserve surveyed by Vaughan was too small, and included land (the parish river lots) that was *not* meant to be incorporated. Many St. Peter's band households were listed as having more than five people attached to them. In 1871, for example, James Asham's family was listed as having six people, and William Grey Eyes' family had seven.¹⁵¹ If we assume an average of four or five people per household, and allow for a few years to reach a more accurate estimate of the number of households, the St. Peter's population may have significantly exceeded the 1,875 persons utilized by Tyler, Wright & Daniel to calculate a reserve size of 60,000 acres. In any case, with or without the incorporation of the valuable privately-held river lots, the land

¹⁵⁰ See Canada, *Indian Treaties and Surrenders*, vol. 1, p. 282-85 for the text of Treaty 1. For discussion of acreage, demographics, and problems associated with including the private river lots in the reserve total, see Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 4; Martin-McGuire, *First Nation Land Surrenders on the Prairies*, p. 210.

¹⁵¹ PAM, MG4 D5, "St. Peter's Reserve, Treaty Money Pay Lists 1871-1883."

surveyed as I.R. No. 1 was substantially smaller than the original “Indian reserve” recognized as the traditional territory of Peguis’s people since 1817. Between 1817 and the post-1871 surveys, it is clear that the “reserve” lands of Peguis’s Saulteaux and Cree people had already significantly dwindled to a fraction of their former size.

Finally, a fourth geographical space to keep in mind is the total acreage surrendered “on behalf” of the Indians after 1907. Evidence suggests that there were only 48,000 acres of St. Peter’s reserve land left to surrender in 1907.¹⁵² Between the surveys of the 1870s and the “surrender agreement” three decades later, at least 7,000 acres of additional reserve land had been whittled away or otherwise alienated. When one accounts for the fact that the reserve itself ought to have been at least 5,000 acres larger than actually surveyed, and possibly much greater,¹⁵³ and that the 17,000 acres of privately-held river lots in St. Peter’s parish were not supposed to be a part of the reserve calculation, one could argue that *prior to 1907* the St. Peter’s Indians had actually lost 38-40% of the total lands (collective and private) that ought to have been held by them, according to the terms agreed upon at Treaty 1. One of the first pieces of I.R. No. 1 to be alienated was part of the southeastern corner of the St. Peter’s Parish known as the “Mile Square,” which settlers wanted because of its proximity to a proposed Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) bridge across the Red River. In 1875, the CPR planned to build a bridge over the Red River just above (south of) the reserve and below (north) of Lower Fort

¹⁵² Martin-McGuire, *First Nation Land Surrenders*, p. 210.

¹⁵³ See the earlier discussion of treaty annuity paylists as a reliable source for determining St. Peter’s Band population in the 1871-73 period. For example, if the actual Band population was 2,500 persons, rather 1,875, then the collectively-held reserve ought to have been 80,000 acres under the terms of Treaty 1.

Garry.¹⁵⁴ This land comprised eleven river lots in all (#'s 236-246) totaling almost 1,000 acres, and was desired as a growth area for the new town of Selkirk. (In fact, the "Mile Square" which was part of the St. Peter's Reserve, is now within the Town of East Selkirk.) It was also land that Indian Agent Ebenezer McColl later described as "unsurpassed" in fertility.¹⁵⁵ However, these coveted river lots were not put up for sale for 25 years – until 1900, when they were put on the market via the Dominion Lands Office in Winnipeg at \$6 per acre. In fact, the lands were left dormant for more than 25 years, and the Dominion refused St. Peter's band requests to return them, suggesting that only Indians were required to meet the "productive use" criteria for land ownership that colonizers consistently trotted out as a rationale for dispossession.

In conclusion, these four distinct geographies are benchmarks for assessing the dispossession of the St. Peter's Indians before and after the events of 1907. The reservation system that came into being on the Prairies in the 1870s and 1880s was itself a part of the process of "Indian removal." Soon after Canadian Confederation in 1867, the new Dominion Government sought the means for its own expansion into the "northwest," a vaguely defined territory between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast. In 1870, after years of negotiations, the Hudson's Bay Company agreed to sell what it called "Rupert's Land" to the new Canadian Dominion, for the sum of £300,000, or what was then \$1.5 million Canadian.¹⁵⁶ But like earlier assertions of imperial prerogative and "ownership," such as the HBC Charter, the Selkirk Grant, or the Louisiana Purchase, the "Rupert's Land transfer" of 1870 was a legal farce without reference to, or consent by the

¹⁵⁴ Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 9, 124-25.

¹⁵⁵ E. McColl to D.S.G.I.A., 6 Nov. 1894, RG10, Vol. 3623, File 5084.

¹⁵⁶ Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 50.

actual indigenous owners. The numbered treaties of the 1870s were themselves a recognition of the fundamental fraud behind these earlier grants or transactions.

It is clear that the post-Confederation treaties were envisioned by Canadian colonizers as, in part, a relatively inexpensive means to promote white settlement and British imperial consolidation in North America. Both colonial officials and subsequent Canadian historiography have presented this wave of treaty-making as a wise and benevolent alternative to the “Indian wars” of the United States. But the reservation system that was integral to the treaty-making process had a similar intent and function on both sides of the 49th parallel. Pretensions aside, it was first and foremost a system of “Indian removal,” as it was designed to maximize land available for white settlers, and minimize the number of Indians upon it.¹⁵⁷ Theda Perdue and Michael Green have noted in their recent book on the Cherokee that “Indian removals” such as the Trail of Tears were fundamentally a process of ethnic cleansing.¹⁵⁸ However, it is important to point out that the reservation systems in Canada and the U.S. necessitated an even more comprehensive and equally forceful process of separation and exclusion. Combined with legislation such as various iterations of the Indian Act, the reservation system from the outset was a form of *apartheid* (separation and legislated “racial” discrimination), one that required an even greater dispossession and ethnic cleansing to implement. The widespread land surrenders of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of which the St. Peter’s Reserve removal was merely one example, were in essence the tip of the iceberg. They were the post-removal removals. Understanding the scale of this

¹⁵⁷ For a comparison of treaty-making in Canada and the United States, see Jill St. Germain, *Indian Treaty-Making Policy in the United States and Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

¹⁵⁸ Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*, p. 42.

dispossession, including but not limited to the dissolution of reserve lands during and after the Laurier era, is crucial to an understanding of Treaty 1's implementation. A more accurate assessment of the scale of this dispossession, as well as the spirit, implementation, and breaches of Treaty 1, is also a necessary (but not sufficient) prerequisite to discussing a just resolution and reparations.

CHAPTER 3

THE ST. PETER'S RESERVE "REMOVAL:" SETTLER RATIONALES FOR
ETHNIC CLEANSING

The traditional view of the nineteenth-century expansion and consolidation of the colony of Canada "into the West" is characterized by a framework that emphasizes peaceful settlement, intrepid voyageurs and pioneers, the extension of "the rule of Law" into "wilderness," and the negotiated purchase of lands from indigenous peoples by means of treaties. Sometimes, there is also a simultaneous lament about the "excesses" of extremists and individuals, and the concomitant "tragic" loss of Indians' traditional way of life and sovereignty, their dispossession, their confinement to small "reserves," and their resultant dependency and impoverishment. Canadian historiography is dominated by the notion that this process of colonial expansion was fundamentally different from the so-called "winning of the West" in the United States. In this view, diplomacy and honestly-pursued land "surrender" or "purchase" agreements were the norm – unlike the duplicity, coercion, repeated "Indian wars," and even genocide that are sometimes acknowledged to the south.

In other words, if there is a distinctly-Canadian historiographical paradigm, it is a paradigm of peaceful settlement, the extension of "law and order," and the negotiated "purchase" of land from indigenous peoples. The overt racism and teleologies of "progress" and "civilization" that infused earlier works, including those by George F. G. Stanley and W.L. Morton, have for the most part given way to more balanced and respectful approaches, in the writings of diverse figures such as Gerald Friesen, George Woodcock, J.R. Miller, Sidney Haring, Frank Tough, Arthur Ray, John Tobias, Olive

Dickason, Sarah Carter, and many others. Since the 1970s, there has also been an increasing willingness to acknowledge historical crimes, such as the use or threat of violence, the deliberate use of starvation as a tool of pacification and control, and even the genocidal nature of the residential school system. Many scholarly studies of treaty-making no longer assume the “wisdom” and “benevolence” of Dominion officials and policies, nor assume Indians to have been “passive victims.”¹⁵⁹ But in addition to the many positive changes reflected in the historiography over the last forty years, there still remain significant points of continuity with an older paradigm. This continuity shows itself *between the lines* and in the underlying assumptions behind any discussion of treaties, title, sovereignty, and even “borders” and “borderlands” in Canadian history. A full treatment of these issues is not possible here, but in some respects – particularly as it relates to the nature, genealogy, “justice,” and “inevitability” of the “transfer” of title and sovereignty from colonized to colonizer – the paradigm remains largely intact.

Aboriginal scholars and activists have been at the forefront of challenging and revising historical interpretations and paradigms. Many of these voices have long insisted that European colonizers and their settler-descendants were perpetrators of massacres, theft, genocide, and collective dispossession and dispersal – and argued that this process of “title transfer” was anything but peaceful, negotiated, lawful, and voluntary.¹⁶⁰ Yet Canadian historiography as a whole – including much of what has been

¹⁵⁹ See for example, John L. Taylor, “Canada’s Northwest Indian Policy in the 1870s: Traditional Premises and Necessary Innovations,” in Richard T. Price (ed.), *The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1999. 3rd edition.

¹⁶⁰ Some examples include Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass*. Toronto: New Press, 1975; Howard Adams, *A Tortured People: The Politics of Colonization*. Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 1999; Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society*. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969; Maria Campbell, *Halfbreed*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982, original

called the “new Indian history” after 1970 – has been slow to incorporate such perspectives, and in some cases, remains relatively impervious to these realities. Even those works which re-interpret Canadian and indigenous history “from below,” utilize critical colonialism models to frame the issues, and are unafraid to condemn both historical crimes and present social inequalities and injustices, almost universally fail to challenge the notion that the transfer of Aboriginal title and sovereignty to Euro-Canadian colonizers was “legitimate,” and even if historically problematic, must *now* be considered a *fait accompli*. Time constraints do not allow for a full treatment and critique of this historiography. One of the goals of this thesis, however, is to assert an alternative paradigm for Canadian historiography – one of “ethnic cleansing,” rather than one based on the relatively “peaceful” and “lawful” extension of “civilization” into “wilderness,” or the negotiated “purchase” of Indian lands by means of treaties.¹⁶¹

This chapter discusses the St. Peter’s “removal” as a case study of ethnic cleansing, focusing on the settler ideology and rationales behind expulsion. While the details of individual corruption and graft documented in the Tyler report are necessary pieces of the puzzle, the larger process and framework of colonialism and racism are *also*

publication 1973; George Manuel, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality*. Don Mills, Ontario: Collier-Macmillan Canada, 1974; Daniel Paul, *We Were Not the Savages: A Mi'kmaq Perspective on the Collision Between European and Native American Civilizations*. Halifax: Fernwood Books, 2000; Sharon Venne, *Our Elders Understand Our Rights: Evolving International Law Regarding Indigenous Rights*. Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 1998.

¹⁶¹ I am indebted to scholars Nur Masalha and Ilan Pappé for their suggestive challenges to the historiography of Israel-Palestine, which has helped bring some of the universal aspects of settler-colonialism into focus. I have modified Pappé’s own call for a “paradigm of ethnic cleansing” to a Canadian context. See Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006, p. xvi. Also, Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*. Beirut & Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992.

critical for understanding the entire sordid fifty-year conflict ending in the dispossession and dispersal of the St. Peter's Indians. In other words, the dissolution of the St. Peter's reserve was *not* the work of "bad apples," but rather the predictable consequence of a bad barrel. The forces at work were (and crucially remain) systemic, both in terms of the economic imperatives at work, and in terms of the cultural aspects of imperialism and colonialism that lend themselves to ethnic cleansing. Insofar as this narrative is successful, it stands as a repudiation of some of the dominant and enduring myths of Canadian historiography.

Treaty 1 may have promised that the St. Peter's Reserve would remain "for the sole and exclusive use of the Indians" in perpetuity, but both the documentary record and subsequent history suggest that such promises were viewed by Dominion officials and other colonizers as a simple and temporary expediency, to facilitate a much greater land acquisition, avoid "costly" Indian wars (both in terms of money and lives lost), as well as promote white settlement. Canadian settler-colonialism was hardly unique in its contempt for the notion that *prior occupancy* gave indigenous peoples anything more than tenancy or "use-rights" to their own territory – let alone the right to *retain* either title or sovereignty, and defend such rights through force of arms.¹⁶² The histories of settler-colonialism from Ireland, Canada, and the United States, to South Africa, Rhodesia, Algeria, Palestine, Australia, and New Zealand, reveal some striking parallels in terms of the rationales and means of dispossession, even though these manifested themselves in

¹⁶² See John C. Weaver, *The Great Land Rush & The Making of the Modern World, 1650-1900*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003; John McLaren et. al. (eds.), *Despotic Dominion: Property Rights in British Settler Societies*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005.

historically-specific ways, and outcomes varied.¹⁶³ Critical theorists such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Edward Said have shown how imperialism and colonialism are, in their very essence, negations of indigenous people's human rights as individuals, and assaults on their collective rights as *nations* or *peoples*. The late Edward Said, for example, argued that "Everything about human history is rooted in the earth," and in a fundamental way, "imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others."¹⁶⁴ He observed that "When the Western powers were not in close, sometimes ruthless competition with one another for more colonies ... they were hard at work settling, surveying, studying, and of course ruling the territories under their jurisdiction."¹⁶⁵ Said's views on the critical importance of land, the nature and scope of imperialism, and the process of dehumanization and dispossession – particularly in his *least cited* works, dealing with Zionism and Palestine¹⁶⁶ – have much to offer histories and analyses of indigenous North America.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ See for example, Nicholas Canny, "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," *William & Mary Quarterly* (Vol. 30, 1973); Annie Coombes (ed.), *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand, and South Africa*. Manchester, NY: Manchester University Press, 2006; Joan Fairweather, *A Common Hunger: Land Rights in Canada and South Africa*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006; Christina Murray & Catherine O'Regan (eds.), *No Place to Rest: Forced Removals and the Law in South Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

¹⁶⁴ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1993, p.7.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.8.

¹⁶⁶ Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine*. New York: Vintage, 1992; *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination*. New York: Vintage, 1995, p.164-65; and *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After*. New York: Pantheon, 2000, p.128-29.

¹⁶⁷ For an elaboration of such themes, see Paul Burrows, "Olive Tree and Turtle Island: A Comparison of Settler-Colonialism in Palestine and Native North America," unpublished

In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Said defined *imperialism* as “the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory,” and defined *colonialism*, “which is almost always a consequence of imperialism,” as “the implanting of settlements on distant territory.” For Said, “Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and peoples *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination.” Furthermore, imperialism invariably included an “almost metaphysical obligation to rule subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples.”¹⁶⁸

But as John Mack Faragher has argued, there are significant differences in manifestations of settler-colonialism itself, which highlight a tension or contradiction between Said’s “metaphysical obligation to rule [allegedly] subordinate, inferior, or less advanced peoples,” and a desire to expel or exterminate them altogether, and – not incidentally – take their land. Faragher has argued that this difference was largely rooted in the different cultural politics of the colonizer, and that there was a significant difference between English, French, and Spanish forms of settler-colonialism. Unlike the French and Spanish North American empires, which have been called “frontiers of inclusion,” due to the “strong affiliations developed between native and colonist communities, including a good deal of cultural and social mixing, even intermarriage,” the British and U.S. empires established what Faragher calls “frontiers of exclusion.” In

paper presented at the *(Dis)united Empires* History Conference, Queen’s University, Kingston, May 2006.

¹⁶⁸ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.9-10.

his words, this tended to mean that indigenous peoples were confined “to separate and distinct territories” and *where possible*, forced “to remove further west.”¹⁶⁹

In any case, British and Canadian colonization of “the West” after the Selkirk Grant of 1811, and particularly after 1867, clearly involved both imperialism and colonialism in all the myriad ways articulated by Said and other theorists. Attitudes, knowledge, and culture were brought to bear as much as brute force or the threat of force; paternalistic and thoroughly-racist “civilizing missions” as much as mercantilist (and later capitalist) imperatives and private profit. In essence, the conquest of the misnamed “Canadian West” was more a product of attrition and threats than outright or prolonged warfare. However, the history of Canadian colonialism as a whole demonstrates that this *relatively* bloodless annexation of the longitudinal centre of British North America had more to do with historical circumstances, than principle. Contrary to the oft-repeated myth of Canadian “nation-building” that emphasizes mutual agreement, treaty-making, and the extension of “Law” into “wilderness,” violence, massacres, warfare, ethnic cleansing, and genocide were as much a part of “Canadian” settler-colonialism as they were features of U.S. Indian-white history.

Furthermore, the gradual extension of rule over Assiniboine, Cree, Saulteaux and Métis peoples in the Canadian West nevertheless involved – as *foreign rule* typically does – countless related realms and “disciplines” of empire: exploration, surveying and mapping, geology, scientific, industrial, and military technologies, mass media,

¹⁶⁹ John Mack Faragher, “‘More Motley than Mackinaw:’ From Ethnic Mixing to Ethnic Cleansing on the Frontier of the Lower Missouri, 1783-1833,” in Andrew R.L. Cayton & Fredrika J. Teute (eds.). *Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998, p. 305.

dehumanization, propaganda, the construction of heroes and villains and other nation-building mythologies, the deployment of regular armies and building of fortifications, the founding of “settlements” or colonies in foreign lands, the organization of “settler” militias, the “removal” (or ethnic cleansing) of indigenous peoples from coveted lands, the denigration, regulation or prohibition of indigenous cultures, histories, languages, and religions, the policy-induced destruction of indigenous economic self-sufficiency (and concomitant manufacture of dependency), the use of food rations and threat of starvation as a weapon, and very predictably, the killing and imprisonment of indigenous leaders and “rebels” who did not accept their assigned role. As with colonialism elsewhere, the annexation of the Canadian west also involved an array of indigenous responses from negotiation and co-optation, to civil disobedience and armed resistance.

As with many other cases and phases of settler-colonialism, there was an initial honeymoon of mutual benefit and trade between native and newcomer in the Red River valley. Though he was referring to the *pays d'en haut*, or “Great Lakes” region, Richard White called this honeymoon a “middle ground,” a term that had both geographical and cultural meanings. For White, this “middle ground” was a place “in between cultures, peoples, and ...empires,” a place of “accommodation” and “negotiation” between different civilizations, a process of “creation” as well as “destruction.” White argued that the interaction and accommodation and mutual creation that occurred in the *pays d'en haut* “took place because for long periods of time in large parts of the colonial world whites could neither dictate to Indians nor ignore them.” The unique cultural and political and diplomatic forms that developed in the *pays d'en haut* were “a joint Indian-white creation,” a hybrid world that only dissolved “when Indians ceased to have the

power to force whites onto the middle ground.”¹⁷⁰ In short, White argued that it was a necessary and conscious *prudence* on the part of European colonizers, generated by indigenous people’s power and willingness to defend themselves through force of arms, that directly generated this “middle ground,” and it was relative power that determined its duration.

White’s concept of the “middle ground” suggests an alternative explanation for Faragher’s distinction between “frontiers of inclusion” and “exclusion.” For Faragher, the distinction was based on the specific culture of the colonizer – whether they were English, French, or Spanish – as much as, if not more than, shifting demographic and power dynamics. Faragher suggests that the French were politically and culturally predisposed to constructing a “frontier of inclusion,” and living in mutual cooperation with indigenous peoples, inter-marrying, sharing land and resources, and adopting indigenous practices – a conclusion reinforced by historian Gilles Havard’s study of New France.¹⁷¹ The English (and later U.S. and Canadian) colonizers, by contrast, were predisposed to maintaining a “frontier of exclusion,” expelling or killing indigenous peoples, and appropriating their land and resources for their exclusive use. Faragher’s distinction between colonial inclusion and exclusion is persuasive up to a point, but his over-emphasis on the differences between European colonizers is highly reductionist and ultimately Eurocentric. It seems clear that the French were as capable of massacres and land thefts as the English, and the English, when historical circumstances and prudence

¹⁷⁰ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.x-xv.

¹⁷¹ See Gilles Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001.

demanded it, were as capable of “sharing” the land and learning from native peoples as the French.

A synthesis of White’s and Faragher’s concepts might better articulate a tendency and trajectory of accommodation and domination in all forms of settler-colonialism. When demography and power dynamics are such that aspiring colonizers are either weak, or at best unable to dictate terms to indigenous peoples, then there tends to be a period of mutual benefit, trade, and exchange that shares features of both White’s “middle ground” and Faragher’s “frontier of inclusion.” If and when this weakness gives way to parity, or parity gives way to an imbalance of power (demographic, economic, military, and so on), then colonizer prudence, respect, and mutuality can – and historically tend to – give way to imperial arrogance. It is at this point that a new spectrum of imperial or colonial goals and strategies come to the fore, and the particular avenue taken is influenced by factors as diverse as colonizer culture and political ideology, differences in *indigenous* cultures, ideologies, and responses, reliance upon indigenous labour and trade-goods, ability of the colonized to resist, and so on. Whether or not a colonizer attempts to impose formal rule over a colonized people, or attempts to construct a “frontier of exclusion,” expelling or killing indigenous peoples in the hopes of taking their land, is a consequence of many factors – not just whether the colonizer is English, French, or Spanish. At least as important are the culture, politics, economy, and power facing the colonizer: whether they are, for example, Lakota or Mayan, Mohawk or Mapuche, Haida or Inca.

Unfortunately, the history of native-newcomer relations and settler-colonialism in North America since the first European colonies were established in the seventeenth-century, suggests that this shift from initial prudence and respect to imperial arrogance,

and this transition from a relationship of mutual benefit and trade to attempts to either impose foreign rule, or engage in mass killings, genocide, or ethnic cleansing, was a matter of *when*, not if.

In “Rupert’s Land,” the imperial *presumptions* which began with the HBC Charter and Selkirk Grant, as well as the exploratory and eventually trade missions of the French, British, *canadien*, and Métis, became an imperial and colonial *relationship* during the course of the nineteenth century. One can debate which of the many attitudes, incidents, events, or dates might qualify as a symbol or watershed in this transition to a formal imperial and colonial relationship, but the transition itself is not in question. Laura Peers, for example, argues that the initial honeymoon of mutual respect and benefit between the HBC and British colonists on the one hand, and Peguis’s Saulteaux on the other, did not last long at all. In 1822, a mere five years after the Selkirk Treaty was signed, HBC Governor George Simpson stated: “I am convinced they [the Indians] must be ruled with a rod of Iron to bring and keep them in a proper state of sub-ordination, and the most certain way to effect this is by letting them feel their dependence upon us.”¹⁷²

Of course, imperial *aspirations* are not the same as institutionalized imperial rule. The latter only began to emerge more clearly in the 1840s, when colonizers began to intervene more openly in indigenous peoples’ lives, bring to bear a more formal apparatus of coercion, and attempt to impose aspects of colonial law on their former allies. One expression of this transition was the very public hanging of a Saulteaux (Ojibwa) man in 1845 for the killing of a Sioux. Laura Peers has described the hanging as “an emphatic attempt to assert European standards of justice” over indigenous ones –

¹⁷² Cited in Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 99-100.

particularly, given the fact that under Ojibwa law this particular killing of a Sioux warrior had been justified.¹⁷³ A second indication of the transition to formal imperial rule at Red River was the arrival of a British military regiment in 1846. Mapping was itself an integral pre-requisite of imperial rule, and a series of formal survey expeditions soon followed: a “Canadian” survey party led by S.J. Dawson and Henry Youle Hind, and a British party led by Captain John Palliser were both dispatched in 1857.¹⁷⁴ The increasing exercise of imperial muscle, and the imposition of foreign laws onto indigenous peoples, were indications that the “honeymoon” (Richard White’s “middle ground”) was coming to an end. In the “north-west,” this transition culminated in a series of imperial acts or assertions, such as the “Rupert’s Land Transfer,” the Wolseley expedition to crush Louis Riel’s resistance,¹⁷⁵ the Manitoba Act (1870), the attempt to confine indigenous peoples to a shrinking land base of “reserves” after 1871, and the attempt to govern the minutiae of First Nations’ lives through legislation such as the Indian Act.

Indigenous peoples and Métis resisted this encroachment on their land, resources, sovereignty, and lives in myriad ways, and attempted to win concessions and build-in safeguards for their peoples’ futures. These efforts were reflected in both the Manitoba Act itself, and the post-Confederation treaty negotiations on the Prairies, with varying degrees of success. Ultimately, however, both Indians and Métis were dispossessed, and the best lands were appropriated by foreign colonizers – including large portions and in

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 157-58.

¹⁷⁴ Morton, *Manitoba*, p. 96.

¹⁷⁵ John A. Macdonald’s expressed opinion towards the Métis in early 1870 was as follows: “[T]hese impulsive half breeds ... must be kept down by a strong hand until they are swamped by the influx of settlers.” Cited in D.N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1988, p. 89.

some cases the entirety of what had been guaranteed as “reserve” land through treaty negotiation.

Attempts by colonizers to whittle away portions of the St. Peter’s Reserve began almost as soon as the ink was dry on Treaty 1. The first official survey of what would become the St. Peter’s Reserve (I.R. No. 1) after 1871 was itself a major violation of two critical terms agreed upon at the Treaty 1 negotiations – namely, that the reserve size would be based on a ratio of 32 acres per person, and would *not* include private holdings by individual Indians (such as the river front lots of the St. Peter’s Parish). Less than two years after the treaty was signed, St. Peter’s Indians had petitioned the Dominion about Treaty 1 violations.¹⁷⁶ Most ominously of all, before the end of 1873, Indian Superintendent J.A.N. Provencher had raised the question of “conflicting claims” between Indians, whites, and “half-breeds” to St. Peter’s river lots in his annual report to the Department of Indian Affairs – an issue that would re-appear again and again and trigger an endless series of investigative commissions and reports, from the McColl-Witcher Commission of 1884-85, to the T.G. Rothwell report of 1900, to the Howell Commission of 1906-07, which ultimately led to the “surrender agreement” of 1907. It was ironic that it was legitimate grievances and petitions raised by the St. Peter’s Indians themselves over Treaty violations and settler encroachment that led to these commissions and reports, and ultimately, served as both catalyst and pretext for the eventual dissolution of the entire reserve.

Colonizer pressure on St. Peter’s lands – whether these lands were designated as “official” reserve by the Dominion or not – was not new. Examples of attempts to buy

¹⁷⁶ Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 82.

pieces of river-front land go back to the 1830s, when Peguis himself was offered “a keg of rum and three blankets” in return for the valuable river-front lands of Sugar Point.¹⁷⁷ However, pressure, duplicity, “surrenders,” and outright land thefts increased and became continuous after 1871, and resulted in a piece-meal appropriation *long before* 1907. In 1875, for example, colonial officials obtained a “surrender” of part of the southeastern corner of the St. Peter’s Parish that was known as the “Mile Square.” This land comprised eleven river lots (numbers 236 to 246) totaling approximately 1,000 acres of prime agricultural land, with soil that Indian Agent Ebenezer McColl would later describe as “unsurpassed” in fertility.¹⁷⁸ The Mile Square was initially wanted because of Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) plans to build a bridge across the Red River just above (south of) the reserve and below (north of) Lower Fort Garry, a possibility that played a determining role in one of the first major violations of St. Peter’s Indians’ rights under Treaty 1: the founding in 1875 of an illegal colony in the midst of St. Peter’s Indian lands – namely, the Town of Selkirk itself.

Barry Potyondi has described in heroic prose the story of the founding of the town of Selkirk. In his narrative, it was the spring of 1875 when nine men in a York boat, loaded with axes and gear, went north towards the “Indian Settlement,” and “slipped past the stone mission church that had stood at St. Peter’s since 1853, past a string of white-washed Indian houses,” and landed at a “heavily wooded spot” near Sugar Point. The men were employees of the CPR, and had come to establish a telegraph office at the point proposed for the potential railway bridge crossing. The site they chose, already inhabited

¹⁷⁷ Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 126.

¹⁷⁸ Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 9, 124-25. E. McColl to D.S.G.I.A., 6 Nov. 1894, RG10, Vol. 3623, File 5084.

by Indians and Métis of the St. Peter's Reserve, was to become the town of Selkirk. James Colcleugh, one of the early "founding fathers" of Selkirk and its first Mayor, came west that same year to run the telegraph operation.¹⁷⁹ According to Potyondi, "The Settlement was still a raw place when he [Colcleugh] arrived. It was, in fact, *the centre* of an Indian reservation where the descendants of the legendary Chief Peguis lived."¹⁸⁰

Potyondi acknowledged that this new town of Selkirk was *entirely* within the area promised to the St. Peter's Indians under Treaty 1, and that – in his words – most of the people living between Sugar Point and Netley Creek at that time were "half-breeds and Indians."¹⁸¹ His narrative suggests that Sugar Point, an area recognized as St. Peter's Indian land since the Selkirk Treaty of 1817, was simply seized by agents of the CPR and settler squatters, and subsequently cut off from the original understanding of what constituted the "Indian Reserve." This appropriation was aided by the ambiguity of the written text of Treaty 1, which does not mention a physical landmark such as Sugar Point. Instead, the treaty text declares the southern edge of the "St. Peter's Parish" to be the reserve boundary. The sleight of hand involved only becomes evident through a comparison of historical maps and surveys, which make clear that Sugar Point was situated originally within the St. Peter's Parish, and then unilaterally declared to be within a new parish called St. Clements.¹⁸²

"St. Clement's Parish," Potyondi explained, "had not yet been surveyed by the government between St. Andrew's and St. Peter's, and consequently the southern

¹⁷⁹ Barry Potyondi, *Selkirk: The First Hundred Years*. Winnipeg: Josten's / National School Services, 1981, p. 9-12. Also, see Colcleugh's entry in Bumsted, *Dictionary of Manitoba Biography*, p. 53.

¹⁸⁰ Potyondi, *Selkirk*, p. 12-13, emphasis added.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁸² See the map in *Ibid.*, p. 10.

boundary of the new reservation began just south of Sugar Point. As such, it included all of the planned town of Selkirk.”¹⁸³ In other words, whether he intended it as such or not, Potyondi’s narrative makes it clear that the foundation of Selkirk was an act of squatters and a known violation of Treaty 1 barely four years after its signing. An historical map of the Red River settlement in 1859 reproduced in Potyondi’s history of Selkirk shows the original division between the parishes of St. Andrew’s and St. Peter’s (i.e., *before* the creation of the St. Clement’s parish between them.) On this and other maps, it is crystal clear that Sugar Point was within the St. Peter’s parish – that it was the southern boundary of St. Peter’s.¹⁸⁴ In other words, Sugar Point was supposed to be included in the St. Peter’s reserve according to Treaty 1. It was a sleight of [surveyor’s] hand that altered the boundary of the St. Peter’s Parish northward, and annexed Sugar Point to a new parish, for the express purpose of establishing yet another illegal colony on Indian land.

Both Sugar Point and the Mile Square were (and remain) valuable lands that were once-recognized as St. Peter’s Indian territory. They were annexed in different ways in the mid-1870s to make way for railway development and the illegal settlement of Selkirk. The possibility of the CPR line crossing the Red River below Lower Fort Garry, and the related growth of the town of Selkirk, led to a wave of land purchases, sky-rocketing prices, real estate speculation, and settler squatting. Successive river lot sales by Indians to non-Indians and others, spurred by the sudden increase in land values, also exacerbated the “conflicting claims” to St. Peter’s Parish river lots that Indian Superintendent Provencher had noted as early as 1873. But the conflicting claims and confusion over the

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 15; also, Jean Friesen, “Grant Me,” p. 48.

validity of land sales in the St. Peter's Parish – a strip of land that was not supposed to be included in the reserve land calculation in the first place – has overshadowed several important facts. Most importantly, the land annexed on both sides of the Red River for what would become the Town of Selkirk represented by far the greatest act of theft and most serious breach of Treaty 1 in relation to the St. Peter's Indians to date. It was a development that has been normalized as a “natural” and “inevitable” part of the “settlement of the West” in Canadian historiography. But it was a major violation of Treaty 1, and it was also, ultimately, a major causal factor in the eventual dissolution of the St. Peter's Reserve and the expulsion of the Indians themselves. By 1883, only eight years after helping establish the illegal CPR outpost-turned-settlement on Indian land, Selkirk settler James Colcleugh displayed a common colonizer arrogance and racism when he petitioned the Dominion to dissolve the entire St. Peter's reserve as a “drawback to our growth and prosperity.”¹⁸⁵ More important than arrogance, Colcleugh had an expectation – realistic given the history of settler-colonialism in Canada and elsewhere – that something would be done.

The Tyler study has done an excellent job of demonstrating the economic motives driving the attack on St. Peter's Indian rights, and the mixture of greed, individual corruption, and outright fraud that ultimately led to a successful colonizer campaign to eliminate *not just collectively-held reserve lands*, but also lands held by Indians in fee simple, throughout the lower Red River valley. Rather than attempt to duplicate this work, the focus here will be upon settler ideology and stated rationales for Indian removal and ethnic cleansing. The principal justifications for relocating the St. Peter's

¹⁸⁵ Cited in Carter, “St. Peter's,” p. 50.

Indians and taking their land that were *actually employed* by colonizers, whether they were Dominion politicians and officials, Indian Department personnel, local Selkirk settlers and businessmen, newspaper editors, or Christian missionaries, were as follows:

- 1) Conflicting claims over title and “trespass” made resolution impossible, so the next best option was to grant the Indians a new reserve somewhere else;
- 2) The Indians did not make “efficient” and “productive” use of the land;
- 3) The Indians *desired* and/or *consented* to “sell” their lands, and in any case, it was in the Indians’ own “best interests” to do so, and relocate elsewhere;
- 4) “Fairness” and “equality” between Indians and whites demanded it;
- 5) Indian proximity to “temptation” and “vice” (i.e., the Town of Selkirk) was hindering their “advance” towards “civilization,” and required their relocation to a more remote locale;
- 6) “Public” or “national” interests required the sale of Indian lands and the relocation of the Indians themselves;
- 7) Indians and whites, like “oil and water,” were not meant to mix; and
- 8) St. Peter’s Indians were “not really Indians,” and their land was “not really a reserve.”

These stated justifications had many distinct variants in practice, and they often overlapped, sometimes in mutually contradictory ways. As will be seen, most advocates of Indian relocation attempted to rationalize it as in the “best interests” of the Indians themselves, though occasionally undisguised contempt and racism against indigenous peoples, and motives of personal aggrandizement were expressed. As the Tyler study reveals, a great many of the colonizers who voiced opinions or participated in actual proceedings and commissions related to St. Peter’s lands – including those who ostensibly had a fiduciary duty to protect Indian interests and lands, such as J.O. Lewis, John Semmens, and Orange Clark – were themselves involved in Selkirk-district land speculation. In practice, the stated rationale for “opening up” St. Peter’s reserve lands,

and dispersing the Indians themselves, appears to have been less important to colonizers than successfully acquiring the valuable lands in the final instance.

The first rationale that came to be articulated again and again derived from the “conflicting claims” to select St. Peter’s Parish lots, first noted by Provencher in 1873. A casual reading of the Tyler study, which brings to light a seemingly-endless series of reports, court cases, and Royal commissions, lends itself to the sense that these innumerable claims were both complex and irreconcilable. However, it must be emphasized that the acrimonious debates, court cases, and endless commissions and reports investigating “conflicting claims” to St. Peter’s lands – that ultimately ended with the Howell Commission of 1906-07 and the dissolution of the entire reserve after 1907 – were themselves exacerbated and in many cases *manufactured* by policies stemming from another major violation of Treaty 1: the extension of the Indian Act to Manitoba in 1874, and revisions to the Indian Act in 1876.¹⁸⁶

Leaving aside the question of whether or not there was legitimacy to *any* colonial legislation in the prairies (such as the Manitoba Act of 1870), *prior to 1874*, there was no colonizer law specifically barring Indians from holding private property, or acquiring the same property rights and “homesteading” privileges as were afforded European and Canadian colonizers.¹⁸⁷ In fact, Indian rights to both private property in fee simple, and collective property as a people, were affirmed and guaranteed under the terms negotiated at Treaty 1, even if these guarantees did not subsequently make it into the written text. The application of the Indian Act to Manitoba in 1874, and crucial amendments in 1876,

¹⁸⁶ Legal scholar Sidney Haring has described the Indian Act as “inconsistent with the ongoing treaty-making process” in the “north-west,” but this is a serious under-statement. See Haring, *White Man’s Law*, p. 262.

¹⁸⁷ Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 7.

not only violated the very treaty that gave European colonizers a semblance of a right to occupy the Red River valley, but they also added the remaining pieces to a formalized apartheid apparatus in the prairies that had hitherto only been preliminary. Many works have detailed the “race-based” features, and repressive applications, of successive Indian Acts.¹⁸⁸ However, it is important to emphasize that the apartheid-like provisions integral to the Indian Act added a complexity to any discussion of legal title and conflicting claims to St. Peter’s lands, because they created new categories of “Indian” (treaty vs. non-treaty) and “Métis,” imposed sexist provisions that stripped Aboriginal women of their Indian status if they married non-Indians, and forced people to make painful choices between colonizer-defined identities. Whether one chose to identify as a “Treaty Indian,” or withdrew from treaty in order to take scrip or apply for land patents, had a direct impact on one’s property rights and livelihood, not to mention one’s ability to live in a given community. As will be seen, these colonial categories exacerbated and in many cases created the very “conflict” over claims and title that the Dominion ostensibly sought to resolve, and became convenient mechanisms for declaring some St. Peter’s residents to be “trespassers,” as well as dispossessing St. Peter’s Indians of both private and commonly-held lands.

In 1874, the earliest incarnations of the Indian Act (1868, 1869, and 1873) were unilaterally extended, with amendments and additions, to the Provinces of Manitoba and

¹⁸⁸ Carter, *Aboriginal Peoples and Colonizers of Western Canada*, p. 117-18, 137-38; Haring, *White Man’s Law*, p. 262-72; Paula Mallea, *Aboriginal Law: Apartheid in Canada*. Brandon: Bearpaw Publishing, 1994, p. 1-2; Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties That Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994. Robert Hunter has more aptly referred to the Indian Act as the “anti-Indian Act,” in Robert Hunter & Robert Calihoo, *Occupied Canada: A Young White Man Discovers His Unsuspected Past*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991.

British Columbia. Section 6 of the 1868 Act was extended without amendment, and asserted the vague and somewhat circular promise that "All lands reserved for Indians shall be deemed to be reserved and held for the same purposes as before the passing of this Act, but subject to its provisions." Following the Royal Proclamation of 1763, Section 6 also stated that "no such lands shall be sold, alienated or leased until they have been released or surrendered to the Crown for the purposes of this Act."¹⁸⁹ Despite the fact that the river-lots of the St. Peter's Parish were not meant to be included in the reserve proper (and therefore would not have been covered under the provisions of Section 6), and despite the fact that the Act itself was a violation of Treaty 1, this legislation was immediately used by Indian Department officials such as Provencher to suggest that any and all land sales by "treaty Indians" would not be recognized.¹⁹⁰ Provencher's ostensible goal was to put an end to the "conflicting claims" he had noted since 1873, and expel those who were considered "trespassers." However, Indian Act provisions such as this, combined with a stunning (and one might argue willful) lack of specificity about definitions and boundaries of reserve lands, as well as new colonizer-defined categories such as "band," "irregular band," "Indian," "non- Treaty Indian," "half-breed," and "enfranchised Indian,"¹⁹¹ were used *in practice* in such a way as to strip St. Peter's Indians of their ancestral and hereditary rights to both reserve lands *and* private holdings.

¹⁸⁹ See "An Act providing for the organization of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, and for the management of Indian and Ordnance Lands" in Sharon H. Venne (ed.), *Indian Acts and Amendments, 1868-1975: An Indexed Collection*. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, Native Law Centre, 1981, p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 9-10.

¹⁹¹ See Sections 3 to 12 of "The Indian Act, 1876" in Venne (ed.), *Indian Acts and Amendments*, p. 24-26.

A particularly vile example of this relates to the three Kennedy sisters of St. Peter's. According to Tyler, Wright and Daniel, the Kennedys were daughters of a St. Peter's Indian man who had lived on valuable river-front property in the St. Peter's Parish (lot 13). In different ways, they were stripped of their birthright and lands due to Indian Act legislation that defined different degrees of "Indian," including patriarchal provisions that stripped women in particular of their community identity, and handed decisions about property over to their husbands. Two of the Kennedy daughters married non-Indians, and under the Indian Act regulations, immediately lost their "status" and treaty rights. The third daughter married Matthew Cook, another member of the St. Peter's Band, and their family (the Cooks) lived on her father's river lot until Kennedy passed away in 1907, at which point the Cooks abandoned it. After their departure, one of the other Kennedy sisters, accompanied by her husband John Gillis, moved onto the property. Under the Indian Act, however, this sister's family was suddenly classified as "trespassers" because she had married a non-Indian. Under the imposed "surrender agreement" of September 1907, Matthew Cook – not one or more of the Kennedy children – appears to have been granted a location ticket to the property. On 27 May 1908, Indian Agent J.O. Lewis wrote to the Secretary of the DIA and spear-headed the charge of "trespass" against the Kennedy-Gillis family, urging Indian Affairs to immediately initiate legal proceedings against them. Not coincidentally, Tyler, Wright and Daniel note, Lewis wrote his letter on the exact same day as Matthew Cook "sold" his newfound claim to the river lot to a U.S. land buyer named George Funk.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 393-94.

The second rationale employed to justify dispossession and ethnic cleansing of the St. Peter's Indians was that the Indians did not make "efficient" or "productive" use of the land. It was an argument that certainly did not originate with those who articulated it in the St. Peter's case. It was a staple of European colonialism, as John C. Weaver and others have demonstrated. Nevertheless, it became a common refrain amongst proponents of the St. Peter's "removal." Frank Oliver outright lied when he stated that the St. Peter's Indians did not farm, though even if the allegation had been true, it would have still been irrelevant. Nevertheless, Oliver called upon this Eurocentric paradigm to argue that the St. Peter's lands were "lying dormant and useless under the ownership of the Indians" and concluded that the reserve needed to be sold off in order to become "productive and tax paying land under the ownership of white people who are willing to pay a fair market price for it."¹⁹³

One of the most prominent figures to employ it was Hector Howell, Chief Justice of the Manitoba Court of Appeal, and Chair of the Royal [Howell] Commission of 1906-07. When Howell was himself called as a witness before the later (1911) Royal Commission, he was asked whether or not the surrender idea originated with him during the course of his own commission. Howell replied: "Well, I will not say that. No, I would not like to claim the honour of that because I think it is an honourable position." He went on to explain what made it "honourable:" "Forty thousand acres of good land with two hundred and fifty acres cultivated, I thought required something to be done."¹⁹⁴ In other words, the oft-asserted "unproductive use" or "under-utilization" of the land by

¹⁹³ Oliver cited in Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 226.

¹⁹⁴ Howell testimony before the 1911 Royal Commission, St. Peter's Reserve Commission (Manitoba), 1911, p. 521-22. Also cited in Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 523.

Indians made their dispossession “honourable.” The fact that these same colonial voices rarely objected to speculators buying up lands, for investment and quick profit rather than agricultural development, did not seem to register as a contradiction. Euro-Canadians were allowed to own land they did not directly “use,” nor even live upon. Indigenous peoples who actually resided there, and had sustained themselves upon it in diverse, and seasonally-specific ways for more than a hundred years, apparently had no such rights.

The third rationale employed to justify ethnic cleansing was that the Indians themselves desired or (typically after the fact) consented to “surrender” or “sell” their lands, and in any event, even if they did not, it was in their own “best interests” to do so. It was also, according to this view, in their best interests to relocate elsewhere (usually to lands not desired for immediate colonization by white settlers, nor expected in the short term to yield significant and profitable resources). Judge Myers, the dissenting judge during the 1911 Royal Commission, wrote: “[I]t seems inconsistent with reason or common sense that any person should seriously contend that this surrender had not been assented to by the whole St. Peter’s Indian band.” He went on to state that “[t]he Canadian people have always striven to deal righteously with the Indians,” and asserted that the twin purposes of the Crown were “the general public weal and the betterment of the condition of these St. Peter’s Indian families.”¹⁹⁵

No matter what other justifications were employed, “Indian best interests” were almost universally-declared to be a principal goal. Howell, for example, declared before the 1911 Royal Commission that “the Indians were greatly the gainers by that surrender and I tried to make the best bargain for them I could ... and Mr Oliver, the Minister,

¹⁹⁵ “Minority Report,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 January 1912, p. 1, 11.

thought I was asking altogether too much for them.”¹⁹⁶ He went on to state: “I made up my mind that for the good of the Indian tribe beyond any question they ought to get off that reserve.”¹⁹⁷ While scouting locations for the proposed *new reserve* in October 1907, R.D. Foley (Homestead Inspector for the Department of Interior) opposed the choice of the participating Indians as “extravagant.” He declared that the presence of the St. Peter’s Indians “would be very detrimental to the fine district,” which he assumed would soon be wanted by white settlers. However, Foley simultaneously couched his opposition in terms of Indian “interests,” stating: “[I]t would be in the best interests of the Indians themselves to place them on a location where they would not be in close proximity to white settlers.”¹⁹⁸

Another age-old rationale for dissolving Indian reserve lands and withdrawing recognition of the distinct rights of indigenous peoples in general, is the argument that “fairness” and “equality” between Indians and whites demands it. Prior to becoming Indian Agent for the Clandeboye Agency in 1905, J.O. Lewis had been an editor and co-owner of the *Selkirk Journal* (1897 to 1899) and then became the owner of the *Selkirk Expositor*. As early as 1898, Lewis had written an article advocating the dissolution of the St. Peter’s Reserve in the name of “equality” and “fairness” to the Indians. He wrote that the Dominion should not “baby [the St. Peter’s Indians] any longer but give them the patents to their land and place them upon a footing equal to that of their white brethren.”¹⁹⁹ Lewis’s disingenuous calls for dissolving the reserve in the name of “equality” for the Indians cannot withstand the mildest scrutiny. His own conflict of

¹⁹⁶ Howell cited in Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 523.

¹⁹⁷ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 524.

¹⁹⁸ Foley cited in *Ibid.*, p. 357.

¹⁹⁹ Lewis cited in *Ibid.*, p. 184.

interest has been well-documented: Lewis became an Indian Agent, with ostensible fiduciary duties towards the St. Peter's Indians, but he also became a land buyer, and directly assisted a "land speculating syndicate" that had as members personal friends and relatives.²⁰⁰

The fifth rationale employed to justify dispossession and ethnic cleansing was a favoured refrain of missionaries. Indian proximity to "temptation" and "vice," as embodied in the Town of Selkirk, was hindering their "advance" towards "civilization," and thus required Indian relocation to a more remote locale. While testifying before the 1911 Royal Commission, Chief Justice Howell asserted that the presence of non-Indians on St. Peter's Parish river lots made it "utterly impossible to manage it as an Indian Reserve," and made it "utterly impossible to keep them [Indians] either sober or moral."²⁰¹ Later on, Howell was asked directly if he thought the St. Peter's Indians "were too close to civilization?" He replied: "Oh, can anyone doubt it, if he loves the Indian?"²⁰² J.O. Lewis expressed a similar view in his summary report on the St. Peter's Band in 1909. Under the heading "Temperance and Morality" he wrote:

Some of the St. Peter's people are well respected in the neighbourhood. They are able to do business in the town and get credit as easily as white men, and keep their engagements as well. Others have deteriorated. At a confirmation service in the Anglican church a year ago over sixty young men and women were confirmed. There were over three hundred people present. It is generally conceded, however, that the removal of this band to a reserve somewhat more remote from immediate contact with civilization will promote their moral welfare. It will take another period of moral training in the wilderness to enable them to resist the enticing allurements of civilization.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 369-71, 391.

²⁰¹ Howell testimony, St. Peter's Reserve Commission (Manitoba), 1911, p. 521.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 524.

²⁰³ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1909, p. 123.

Lewis's argument that proximity to colonizers was "corrupting" the St. Peter's Indians, and they now required "another period of moral training in the wilderness" was highly disingenuous, given both his personal material stake in the Indians' "removal," and the fact that missionaries and Indian Affairs personnel had routinely employed the opposite argument when it suited their purposes. Only ten years earlier, for example, Ebenezer McColl had reported "a great improvement in morality" and "temperance," despite the proximity to Selkirk, and he clearly wanted to take credit for such "advances."²⁰⁴

"Public interest" was also a common rationale employed, which typically meant either local white settlers and business interests, or an asserted "national interest" that required unhindered European "settlement" and "development." T.G. Rothwell's Department of Interior report on St. Peter's in 1900 was one of the first in-depth proposals for the dissolution of the entire reserve, and it asserted that doing so "would be in their [the Indians'] interest *and in the public interest*."²⁰⁵ The Indians themselves were evidently not part of "the public." In September 1907, the *Winnipeg Tribune* characterized the dissolution of the St. Peter's reserve, and relocation of the Indians to "the shores of Lake Winnipeg" as "a question of vital importance to the town of Selkirk."²⁰⁶ Frank Oliver viewed reserve surrenders in general to be "sound public policy," and viewed the St. Peter's reserve as a "considerable detriment to that part of the country," an "open sore that could not be healed."²⁰⁷ Dr. O.I. Grain, a prominent Selkirk-area Tory, and a bi-partisan supporter of Indian "removal," described the 1907 surrender

²⁰⁴ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1899, p. 128.

²⁰⁵ Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 96. Emphasis added.

²⁰⁶ "Indians are Now Voting: Opening of St. Peter's Reserve Will be Decided," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 23 September 1907, p. 1.

²⁰⁷ Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 225.

as “a very good thing for *the town of Selkirk*,” because it would make land available to people “who would make good settlers.”²⁰⁸ Indians, in Grain’s view, were not “good settlers,” regardless of whether or not they engaged in agriculture. Even ostensible “friends” of the St. Peter’s Indians, such as George Bradbury, employed such rationalizations on occasion.

The seventh justification employed for Indian dispossession and forced relocation was essentially an appeal to old-fashioned racism and prejudice, an assertion that Indians and whites were not meant to mix. In June 1911, Frank Oliver made a speech attacking those (such as George Bradbury) who would encourage the Indians to remain at St. Peter’s, stating bluntly that “oil and water do not mix well, and whites and Indians do not mix well.”²⁰⁹ It is difficult to over-estimate the significance of a statement such as this, emanating from the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, an official whose portfolio and mandate was ostensibly to act as “trustee” of Indian interests. Oliver was hardly an aberration. During a debate about the St. Peter’s surrender, one Member of Parliament stated in the House of Commons in 1911 that “[anyone who] knew anything about western Canada at all ... would know perfectly well that no town ... wants to be alongside of an Indian reserve.”²¹⁰ In Hector Howell’s words, getting rid of the Indians and reserve “would be a vast advantage [for the Selkirk district]. I felt the Indian reserve there was a black spot.”²¹¹ In response to the 1911 Royal Commission declaring the surrender illegal and void, the *Winnipeg Tribune* reported that the majority of Selkirk

²⁰⁸ Grain cited in *Ibid.*, p. 293-94. Emphasis added.

²⁰⁹ Oliver cited in *Ibid.*, p. 498-99.

²¹⁰ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 223.

²¹¹ Howell cited in *Ibid.*, p. 231.

“citizens” simply “do not want the Indians back, under any condition.”²¹² The article failed to note that the majority of Indians had not yet left or been forced off their reserve.

The eighth and final rationale for ethnic cleansing employed repeatedly in the St. Peter’s case was that the St. Peter’s Indians were “not really Indians” at all, and thus, their land was “not really a reserve” in need of special protection. Frank Oliver’s reply to George Bradbury during a debate in the House of Commons contended that the St. Peter’s Indians were not really “Indians” and their reserve not really a “reserve” in the “ordinary sense” of these terms. Oliver asserted that the Crown’s “trusteeship” towards the Indians could not have been violated because the people of St. Peter’s were, in his words, “practically White men.” As such, Oliver argued, they “needed no special protection.”²¹³ Indian Agent J.O. Lewis asserted similar views in a written report on the St. Peter’s Band in 1907, stating: “They cannot be truthfully called Indians in the sense in which we think of such living in tents or teepees ... out of the whole band there are not more than twenty pure-blooded Indians. The others are half-breeds.”²¹⁴ Lewis was employing colonizer definitions of “Indian” and “half-breed” that were rooted in ancestry and blood-quantum, not cultural self-identification. These definitions had nothing to do with how different indigenous peoples determined their own community, cultural, or *national* identities. The imposition of colonizer-defined identities, by means such as the Indian Act, and the direct relationship between these identities and one’s material existence and options (including whether or not one could own private property, take treaty, live on a reserve, opt for scrip, sell one’s produce or manufactured goods on the

²¹² “The Selkirk View of the Case,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 January 1912, p. 11.

²¹³ Oliver cited in Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 476-77.

²¹⁴ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1907, p. 111.

market, and so on), put Aboriginal people in an impossible and painful dilemma – both as individuals and as peoples. Defining “Indians” out of existence by declaring their lineage to be “watered-down,” or by simply stripping Aboriginal women of “status” for marrying non-Indians, were mechanisms for dispossession in practice. Frank Oliver and J.O.

Lewis knew perfectly-well what they were doing when they asserted that there was no such thing as a St. Peter’s Indian anymore.

CHAPTER 4

CONSEQUENCES OF FORCED RELOCATION, 1907-1934

Between 1907 and the mid-1930s the St. Peter's Indians lost the last vestiges of collectively-held territory they had lived upon since the late-eighteenth century, and those who refused "voluntarily" to move were forcibly relocated more than 100 kilometres north, to the site of the present-day Peguis reserve. The few sources that discuss the forced relocation convey the impression that most, if not all St. Peter's Indians began to move to the new Peguis reserve after 1907, and that the process was essentially completed soon after the passage of the federal St. Peter's Reserve Act in 1916. Beyond this general impression as to the timeline involved, the existing literature says almost nothing about the impact of forced relocation on the people themselves.²¹⁵ However, even a cursory investigation into the consequences of this forced relocation forces us to discard and revise this accepted timeline. As late as 1919-20 Indian Affairs officials were reporting that more than half of the St. Peter's Indians remained at their original reserve. More significantly, many of those who *did* relocate to the new Peguis reserve attempted to return to their original lands, almost universally insisting upon two crucial points: 1) the majority of Indians had *never* surrendered the St. Peter's reserve, and 2) conditions at the new reserve were poor, and did not allow them to make an adequate living.²¹⁶ The few sources that acknowledge that there was a forced relocation after 1907

²¹⁵ Albert E. Thompson's book *Chief Peguis and His Descendants* (1973) is one of the few sources to actually discuss early conditions at the new reserve along the Fisher River.

²¹⁶ See the court transcripts for scattered statements by St. Peter's Indians involved in the 1930s repatriation efforts – particularly, the personal testimonies of Henry Pahkoo, Peter

do not tell us that an organized repatriation movement arose in the early 1930s, in defiance of Indian Affairs and colonial authorities. Nor do they tell us why – twenty-five years after they ostensibly voted to surrender their reserve “in their own best interest” – many St. Peter’s Indians preferred to go to jail than give up the land of their ancestors. In short, an over-emphasis on the “surrender agreement” of September 1907 as the pivotal date of dispossession obscures two significant facts. First, St. Peter’s Indians had *already* lost as much as half of their traditional territory, before their self-designated “trustees” in Indian Affairs decided to help dissolve the remaining reserve. Second, the final stages of ethnic cleansing took a quarter-century to complete – precisely because the St. Peter’s Indians were not passive victims; they adopted a range of strategies to resist the theft of their homeland.

Assessing the human consequences of the forced relocation of the St. Peter’s Indians requires more than an overview of immediate and short-term conditions at the new Peguis Reserve, and more than an account of the hardships that may have been endured on the journey to get there – though both of these are necessary parts of the whole. It is also more than a tally of property values and lives lost. As Perdue and Green note in their treatment of the Trail of Tears: “Measuring the disaster in terms of the number of casualties ... is a mistake. If only one Cherokee had died – or none at all – the dispossession and deportation of thousands of people from their homeland under a fraudulent treaty would still be a tragedy.”²¹⁷ Constructing an accurate picture of the human impact of “removal” also requires a comparison of pre-removal and post-removal

Robson, William Flett, and Angus Prince. PAM, MG4 D5, “Evidence & Proceedings of Prosecutions of Indians for trespass on Old St. Peter’s Reserve.”

²¹⁷ Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*, p. 140.

conditions, quality of life indicators, and other domains, including self-identity as well as social and political cohesion. This task is complicated by the fact that the relocation process was uneven and drawn-out, extending into the 1920s and 1930s, and many St. Peter's Indians *never* moved to the new Peguis Reserve. In fact, many sought employment elsewhere, or applied to Indian Affairs for transfer to other reserves where they had kin. Unfortunately, reconstructing the many vectors of dispersal, by tracking particular names and family histories, is an important task that falls outside the parameters of this study.

Furthermore, assessing the medium and long-term impact of the St. Peter's removal is complicated by the fact that Canadian colonialism has undermined Indian self-sufficiency and manufactured dependency and poverty from coast to coast, a process of systemic under-development (or more accurately in many cases, de-development) going back to the earliest days of reserve agriculture in the prairies, and continuing to the present day.²¹⁸ Thus, distinguishing between the specific impact of forced relocation on the St. Peter's Indians, and the generalized and devastating impact of a 400-year legacy of colonialism and racism affecting indigenous peoples across the continent, is by no means a simple task. Statistics related to health and welfare, and other "quality of life" indicators, consistently show that First Nations peoples in Canada experience what

²¹⁸ For deliberate attempts to undermine Indian agricultural and economic successes going back to the 19th century, see Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990, p. 112; and Leo Waisberg & Tim Holzkamm, "A Tendency to Discourage Them From Cultivating," *Ethnohistory* 40 (No. 2, Spring 1993). For other aspects of creating dependency, see Helen Buckley, *From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare: Why Indian Policy Failed in the Prairie Provinces*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992; and Hugh Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.

Shuswap leader George Manuel called “Fourth World” conditions.²¹⁹ A recent anthology entitled *Natives and Settlers, Now and Then* (2007) describes some of these “material realities,” noting that “the statistics relating to every aspect of Aboriginal peoples’ lives and livelihood in Canada today ... are deplorable and grim.” In Manitoba alone, Paul DePasquale notes, average life expectancy of Aboriginal men and women today is seven to eight years lower than the general population, mortality rates for Aboriginal children are four times higher than the Canadian average, suicide rates for youth are five to seven times higher, and Aboriginal people constitute at least 70 percent of the prison population (and higher for women) – prison demographics that make apartheid South Africa’s incarceration of blacks look favourable.²²⁰

Bearing in mind these provisos, and the fact that this study has not attempted to incorporate oral testimony from elders and descendants at Peguis Reserve (and elsewhere) about the St. Peter’s removal, what follows is therefore a tentative and preliminary exploration.²²¹ This chapter juxtaposes the agricultural history, economic successes, and relative prosperity of the St. Peter’s Indians prior to removal, against a preliminary assessment of the immediate and long-term consequences of forced relocation and subsequent life at the new reserve at Fisher River. The consequences of ethnic cleansing are here assessed in terms of an array of quality of life indicators, such as housing conditions, health and disease, social ills, education, employment, and

²¹⁹ George Manuel, *The Fourth World*; also, see Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, p. 330-31.

²²⁰ Paul DePasquale (ed.), *Natives & Settlers, Now and Then: Historical Issues and Current Perspectives on Treaties and Land Claims in Canada*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2007, p. xvii.

²²¹ Oral testimony would contribute to a much more accurate picture of early life at the Peguis Reserve, and the impact of forced relocation on the people involved, but would have necessitated a much greater project than was feasible at this time.

economic diversification and self-sufficiency, as well as through a tentative discussion of the impact on the spiritual beliefs and practices, cultural identity, and political cohesion of the St. Peter's Indians as a whole.

At the turn of the twentieth-century, the St. Peter's Reserve was considered the "banner reserve" of the Department of Indian Affairs in Manitoba, due to the evident agricultural and educational achievements and general prosperity of the St. Peter's Indians – not just relative to other Aboriginal reserves, but also, according to some observers, relative to the standards of colonizer society. St. Peter's had some natural advantages, not the least of which was soil quality. It was one of the only reserves in Manitoba situated on "class 2" or better soil, a category that signified high fertility and good moisture, and allowed a wide range of crops to be grown.²²² But more than this, St. Peter's Indians had worked hard to improve their lands, learn new skills, and adopt new technologies, educate their children, maintain diverse economic activities, and take advantage of the many employment and trade opportunities that proximity to the growing Selkirk colony *initially* offered. These were not entirely new kinds of relationships; St. Peter's Indians had long been involved in diverse economic activities, from independent hunters, trappers, fishers, and traders to working as wage-labour, herdsman, and farm-hands for the HBC at both Lower Fort Garry and Netley Creek.²²³ Indian Affairs officials – like missionaries before them – liked to claim credit for the perceived achievements of the St. Peter's Indians. In reality, however, these achievements were

²²² Carter, "St. Peter's," p. 47; Miller, *The Indian Reserve System in Manitoba*, p. 71-72.

²²³ George Ingram, *Industrial and Agricultural Activities at Lower Fort Garry*. Collected in Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History – No. 4. Ottawa: National Historic Sites Service, DIAND, 1970, p. 58-63; Graham MacDonald, *A Good Solid Comfortable Establishment: An Illustrated History of Lower Fort Garry*. Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1992, p. 44.

made *despite* an often-hostile colonial environment and a host of anti-Indian policies, not as a consequence of Indian Affairs “benevolence” and “wisdom.”

Ebenezer McColl, who became Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Manitoba and the North-West Territories in 1890, wrote in 1901 that

[a] drive along the main highway through the reserve, as it follows the picturesque windings of the river, with its tidy, whitewashed and well shingled dwelling houses on the one hand and the rapidly broadening Red River on the other, with its numerous fishing skiffs, from which the Indians this year were plying a profitable trade, was about as pleasant and exhilarating as any I have ever taken. A stranger passing thus through St. Peter’s, noting the buildings, might be pardoned for looking upon it as an advanced pioneer settlement. Many of the houses are as pretentious as those among the white settlements.²²⁴

McColl was not the first to observe and comment upon the beautiful and well-maintained Indian houses at St. Peter’s. As early as 1867, Isaac Cowie of the HBC had made a similar observation, simultaneously noting the goodwill that the St. Peter’s Indians had had towards the Europeans: “Joyful cries of greeting were exchanged as we sighted and passed the comfortable cabins of the Indian settlers along the river, and we could see that a procession was following us to the fort by the road further back.”²²⁵

In 1885, Indian Agent A.M. Muckle wrote that the St. Peter’s Indians compared favourably to European settlers throughout the parishes of the Red River and Assiniboine “settlement belt” – not just in terms of housing, but also in terms of their agricultural activities and implements, clothing, and annual income. Muckle claimed that the St. Peter’s Indians were “more prosperous and make more money in a year than thousands of people in the older provinces.” However, Muckle also derided the very diversity in

²²⁴ Cited in Carter, “St. Peter’s,” p. 50. Also, see Frances McColl, *Ebenezer McColl: “Friend to the Indians.”* Winnipeg: Frances McColl, 1989; and the entry for McColl in Bumsted, *Dictionary of Manitoba Biography*, p. 150-51.

²²⁵ Cowie cited in Robert Watson, *Lower Fort Garry: A History of the Stone Fort.* Winnipeg: Hudson’s Bay Company, 1928, p. 30.

economic pursuits that allowed for such an income – including hunting, fishing, and berry-picking – because it meant that the Indians did not *exclusively* focus their energies on agriculture.²²⁶

Muckle's exasperation over the "failure" of St. Peter's Indians to engage in the extent or type of agriculture desired by colonizers was part of a long tradition whereby Indian agricultural activities were observed first-hand, but minimized or even denied by various means. Typically employed was the semantic game of labeling Indian agriculture something else – like "gardening" or "horticulture" – to distinguish it from the ostensibly more "advanced" farming activities of Europeans. Another tactic, as Laura Peers has noted in connection to Cockran's "experimental farm" at St. Peter's Parish, was to define "agriculture" in peculiar ways, so that it required certain *kinds* of crops (like wheat), planting methods (straight, homogeneous rows), and even specific, gendered divisions of labour (men, not women, were to work the fields) – definitions that were meant to ensure European agricultural norms and divisions of labour would be given ascendancy.²²⁷

Europeans had long been aware of the agricultural activities and successes of St. Peter's Indians. The Ottawa and Ojibwa at Netley Creek produced sufficient agricultural surplus to sell substantial quantities of corn to Lord Selkirk's earliest colonists in 1811-12, along with fish and game, wild rice, and sugar. They were also provisioners of other crucial supplies and services, such as leather, clothing, shelter, and transportation. In short, St. Peter's Indian food aid has been credited with keeping the Europeans alive

²²⁶ Carter, "St. Peter's," p. 49.

²²⁷ Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 134. Europeans did not always practice these expressed "ideals" themselves, including the ideal of male-centred, sedentary agriculture.

during their first harsh winters.²²⁸ In his opening address at the Treaty 1 negotiations in 1871, Adams Archibald had singled out the St. Peter's Indians specifically, noting their renowned agricultural achievements.²²⁹ Colonizer criticism of the extent or type of agriculture carried out by the St. Peter's Indians was in many ways indicative of an ignorance about environmental and human realities. According to Peers, European crops like wheat and barley, for instance, routinely failed "due to frost, drought, and grasshoppers," and settlers had no choice but to rely upon the Indians and Métis for food. Furthermore, Ojibwa crops consistently had more reliable harvests than European ones.²³⁰ Indians were criticized for insufficient attention to agriculture when they planted seeds and did not stick around to watch them grow – instead, moving on to the next seasonal activity, whether it be hunting, fishing, berry-picking, sugar harvesting, rice harvesting, or seasonal wage-labour in a range of industries, such as freighting, logging, or railway construction. But this seeming aversion to the sedentary agricultural "ideal" of Europeans was in fact a rational economic strategy, rooted in a deeper understanding of local agriculture, not to mention an expression of a common human desire for diversity of work and life circumstances.

St. Peter's Indians had their own strong agricultural history and knowledge, but they were not opposed to learning new techniques and adopting new crops, as the negotiations at Treaty 1 demonstrate. In fact, it was Peguis's son Chief Mis-koo-ke-new ("Red Eagle"), or Henry Prince, who raised the question of agricultural aid six days into the negotiations. Red Eagle's words were printed in a local newspaper: "[T]he Queen

²²⁸ Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 72; Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers*, p. 65.

²²⁹ Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 67.

²³⁰ Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 133.

wishes the Indians to cultivate the ground. They cannot scratch it – work it with their fingers. What assistance will they get if they settle down?” According to Ray, Miller, and Tough, Red Eagle’s intervention helped shift the treaty negotiations away from reserve sizes to “future livelihood needs,” and led immediately to assurances by Archibald that “the Queen was willing to help the Indians in every way, and that besides giving them land and annuities, she would give them a school and a schoolmaster for each reserve, and for those who desired to cultivate the soil, ploughs and harrows would be provided on the reserves.”²³¹

According to J.A.N. Provencher, there were over 2,000 acres under cultivation at St. Peter’s in 1875, though Provencher dismissed Indian agricultural efforts in Manitoba as “rather primitive” for utilizing small plots rather than large fields.²³² “New” crops such as wheat and oats joined earlier ones like corn, squash, and potatoes. However, St. Peter’s agricultural achievements after Treaty 1 appear to have been made despite partial or even complete non-fulfillment of the Dominion’s promised agricultural aid.²³³ In fact, the agricultural history, farming knowledge, and diverse employment activities of Manitoba Indians were used as an excuse to avoid Dominion treaty obligations. In Provencher’s words, Indian familiarity with “industry and agriculture” in Manitoba meant that “the Government is exonerated from the [treaty] obligation” to provide

²³¹ Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 79-80.

²³² Brian E. Titley, “Unsteady Debut: J.A.N. Provencher and the Beginnings of Indian Administration in Manitoba,” *Prairie Forum* Vol. 22, No. 1 (Spring 1997), p. 36, 36n57.

²³³ J.A.N. Provencher was himself dismissed on corruption charges stemming from distribution of inferior or useless farming implements to Indian reserves. Carter, “St. Peter’s,” p. 49; Carter, *Lost Harvests*, p. 63; Titley, “Unsteady Debut: J.A.N. Provencher and the Beginnings of Indian Administration in Manitoba.”

assistance.²³⁴ Lieutenant-Governor Alexander Morris admitted and seemed genuinely distressed over the non-fulfillment of these treaty obligations, writing to the Minister of Interior in 1876: "I regret to say that another season has been allowed to pass *without any effort to carry out the new promises*, and I am exposed to reproaches from the Indians on this account."²³⁵ But Morris's stated desires and personal antipathy for Provencher did not change things. Provencher's policy outlasted his own dismissal on corruption charges in 1878, and according to Sarah Carter, Manitoba Indians never received the same degree of agricultural assistance as they did on other prairie reserves.²³⁶

St. Peter's Indian attempts to maintain diverse, culturally-important, and seasonal economic activities – and to sell the varied products of their labour on the market – eventually came into conflict with colonizer interest groups, such as hunting and fishing associations, as well as agricultural and commercial industries. In the early 1880s, Manitoba's occupation government attempted to enforce new fishing and game laws, and extend them to Indians and Métis – in contravention of verbal promises made to Indians at Treaty 1.²³⁷ Indian Affairs personnel, such as Deputy Superintendent General Lawrence Vankoughnet, opposed the extension of such legislation to Indians, citing both treaty promises and matters of expense. Interference in Indian subsistence practices, Vankoughnet warned in late-1884, would risk starvation and the Dominion would be

²³⁴ Provencher cited in Carter, "St. Peter's," p. 48.

²³⁵ Morris cited in Titley, "Unsteady Debut: J.A.N. Provencher and the Beginnings of Indian Administration in Manitoba," p. 32n42. The "new" promises were actually old Treaty 1 promises – the so-called "outside promises" – that the Dominion took four years to officially recognize.

²³⁶ Carter, "St. Peter's," p. 47-48; Titley, "Unsteady Debut," p. 45.

²³⁷ Archibald stated at Treaty 1: "Till these lands are needed for use, you will be free to hunt over them, and make all the use of them which you have made in the past." Cited in Ray et. al., *Bounty and Benevolence*, p. 77.

forced to feed them.²³⁸ St. Peter's Indians, led by then-Chief William Asham, quickly protested the proposed game laws as a violation of Treaty 1 agreements.²³⁹ But Provincial officials were adamant. The Minister of Agriculture responded by noting that white settlers had been complaining about unfair Indian "privileges,"²⁴⁰ a colonizer refrain that has not ceased to the present day.²⁴¹ Historian Jean Friesen has shown how settler groups, via organs such as the *Manitoba Game and Fish Protection Association*, "organized opposition to Indian hunting rights," and how similar groups, in conjunction with fishing companies and the Ministry of Marine and Fisheries, used highly disingenuous arguments about "conservation" to attack Indian treaty rights to unrestricted fishing.²⁴²

Not everything was rosy between Treaty 1 and the 1907 "surrender agreement." There were moments of serious hunger, precipitated by environmental fluctuations, such as drought, pestilence, or early frosts that devastated crops, decline in certain kinds of game, or – not entirely unforeseen – collapses of a crucial fishery. St. Peter's Indians were hardly immune to the epidemics of disease – measles, tuberculosis, smallpox – that continued to plague both native and newcomer. However, malnourishment during these hard times meant that Aboriginal people were more susceptible to disease than they would otherwise have been. Furthermore, internal divisions between St. Peter's Cree and Saulteaux were exacerbated, if not created, in the aftermath of Treaty 1. A group of Cree led by James Asham, for example, had petitioned the Dominion in 1875 for a separate

²³⁸ Vankoughnet cited in Friesen, "Grant Me," p. 87-88.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 90.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 92.

²⁴¹ See, for example, Tom Flanagan's academic gloss to popular settler prejudices in his *First Nations? Second Thoughts*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

²⁴² Friesen, "Grant Me," p. 95-106.

reserve, arguing that the Swampy Crees had never signed the treaty, and expressed opposition to Saulteaux rule.²⁴³ In 1891, a group of Saulteaux also challenged the legitimacy of Treaty 1, criticized Peguis and Henry Prince for selling off parcels of Indian land for their own personal aggrandizement, and objected to increasing Swampy Cree influence at St. Peter's.²⁴⁴

Despite inadequate or non-fulfillment of agricultural aid, a host of bureaucratic and repressive interventions stemming from the Indian Act, the imposition of fishing and game laws, and other violations of the spirit of Treaty 1, as well as instances of serious hunger, epidemic diseases, and internal divisions, by the turn of the twentieth-century the St. Peter's Indians appeared to be thriving. Taking advantage of new industries throughout the Red River valley, as well as a mutually beneficial trade relationship with merchants in the Town of Selkirk, the people of St. Peter's continued to maintain and build upon their "mixed economy," wisely not wishing to put all their livelihood eggs in one basket.²⁴⁵ As Frank Tough has noted, diversified economies allowed several Indian bands in the interlake region to maintain a degree of economic security. "Wage labour and wide variety of subsistence and commercial resources," according to Tough, "combined to create remarkably flexible and innovative approaches to providing for family needs."²⁴⁶ Fishing industry demands for catfish exports allowed St. Peter's Indians to make between \$15 and \$40 per week – which ought to put into perspective the *annual* \$3 payment originally promised to the Indians for the cession of their land, and the loss of income that mere attendance at treaty payment days entailed. Staple crops had

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 59-60.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 58-59.

²⁴⁵ Carter, "St. Peter's," p. 49.

²⁴⁶ Tough, *'As Their Natural Resources Fail,'* p. 199.

become more reliable and abundant. Livestock herds had grown large. Fur sales continued to bring in substantial income. According to Carter, one Selkirk businessman noted that “St. Peter’s men had a preference for the most expensive ready-made suits.” W.D. Harper, one of the Band Councilors, was a distribution agent who sold “mowers, rakes and wagons to other reserve residents.”²⁴⁷

Relations between St. Peter’s Indians and Selkirk district settlers and businesses were relatively positive, at least on the surface. Annual “treaty days” during the summer at St. Peter’s were perhaps the best expression of this. Massive events, they brought literally thousands of visitors and participants from Winnipeg and the surrounding area each summer. In 1901, Ebenezer McColl described these treaty gatherings as having “the din of an old country fair,” on account of the countless merchant stalls and tents, dance and dining halls providing all manner of food and refreshments, football, lacrosse and other games, and even boating excursions along the Red River. The scale of the festivities, and their political as well as social importance to the St. Peter’s community (marriages were often performed at this time) are likely significant, if not primary, reasons for Indian participation, given that the *annual* \$3 payment (later upped to \$5) promised to the Indians under Treaty 1 was not remotely adequate compensation for the loss of income that mere travel to and attendance at “treaty days” entailed.²⁴⁸

Furthermore, it is plausible that most, if not all of this annuity money – and then some – ended up in the coffers of local Selkirk merchants. “Treaty days” were “an annual gala carnival,” according to Barry Potyondi, and “with over \$12,000 in treaty annuities at

²⁴⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, this depiction of turn-of-the-century prosperity at St. Peter’s is from Carter, “St. Peter’s,” p. 49.

²⁴⁸ Description of “treaty days” festivities, and McColl quote, from Carter, “St. Peter’s,” p. 49-50.

stake each year Selkirk residents began to count it as an important feature of their economy.”²⁴⁹

Under the surface, of course, there were settler voices and organizations, such as James Colcleugh and the Selkirk Board of Trade, clamoring for the dissolution of the St. Peter's Reserve. It seems clear that the very successes of the St. Peter's Indians, the value of their agricultural and river-front lands, and their ability to compete with white settlers (both in terms of wage-labour and in terms of sales), became sources of jealousy and hostility for some European colonizers, who sought means to eliminate Indian competition. St. Peter's Indians showed themselves quite capable of adapting to changing environmental, economic, and political circumstances, and when it suited their own purposes, satisfying the colonizers' rarely-adhered to criteria for "civilization." But attention to agricultural pursuits was uneven, and shifted as other economic opportunities presented themselves. There is some evidence that farming declined at St. Peter's by the late-1880s and remained sporadic into the next century, for a variety of reasons that exasperated Indian Affairs officials. For example, a resurgence of game such as moose and caribou, and substantially higher returns for the effort involved, led many Indians to shift attention from farming back to hunting. Wage employment by fishing export companies, steamship freighters, lumber camps and saw mills, railway construction, and other industries from Selkirk to Lake Winnipeg, also became a favoured option for St. Peter's Indians in the late-nineteenth century.²⁵⁰ Indian Agent John Semmens estimated in 1905 that St. Peter's Indians formed a principal labour core for Lake Winnipeg industries:

²⁴⁹ Potyondi, *Selkirk*, p. 32.

²⁵⁰ Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*, p. 199-200.

As soon as the waters flow free, all the young men of the tribe are in demand as boatmen. Steamers, schooners, fishing smacks and tugs must all be manned and for the most part from St. Peter's. This draws so heavily on the vim and muscle of the reserve that only the infirm are left to care of the women and children and carry on farm work. This continues until October. At this time comes the winter draft of men to the shanties and lumber mills, where they are employed from November until April.²⁵¹

A year later, Indian Agent J.O. Lewis described this shift in less-flattering terms: "The Indian of St. Peter's has become the hewer of wood and drawer of water to the white man."²⁵²

In his annual report for the Department of Indian Affairs (for the year ending 31 March 1907), J.O. Lewis described the Indians of St. Peter's as "fairly industrious," though he stated that they "cannot be truthfully called Indians," as they neither lived in "tents or teepees," nor did they get "their living by hunting, fishing and roving from place to place." According to Lewis, there were "not more than twenty pure-blooded Indians" in the entire community, the rest being "half-breeds who have been living on their river lots in well-built log houses since before the transfer of this country to Canada."²⁵³ Lewis stated of the St. Peter's Indians:

They do not make good farmers, but are much sought after as labourers. Many of them are now engaged in railway construction. In the winter season many are found in the wood camps at Molson, Lac du Bonnet and adjacent places. In the summer a large number go out to Lake Winnipeg as fishermen, sailors or labourers for the fish companies. A few are in Winnipeg, making good wages as mechanics. Their hay-lands afford them a large revenue. Last season they had an abundant hay crop, and in the winter realized high prices for their hay. They cut and sold 4,000 cords of day, fallen or singed wood, obtaining from \$2.50 to \$3.50 a cord.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Semmens cited in *Ibid.*, p. 207.

²⁵² Lewis cited in *Ibid.*, p. 230.

²⁵³ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1907, p.

111.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Lewis's dismissal of the farming capacities of St. Peter's Indians should be taken with a grain of salt, given his own material interest in the dissolution of the reserve,²⁵⁵ and the widespread use Europeans made of such arguments for dispossessing indigenous peoples in general.²⁵⁶ Furthermore, Lewis's own report was internally contradictory on the question of St. Peter's agriculture. In his opening description of the reserve, he had described some of the St. Peter's Indians as "considerable farmers." At the same time, however, Lewis's report offers some insights into the living standards, health and well-being, and education of the St. Peter's Indians, as well as relations between the Indians and nearby Selkirk colonizers, on the eve of the fraudulent surrender of 1907.

Consistent with other observers, Lewis affirmed that the "houses and stables [of St. Peter's] are nearly all built of logs with shingled roofs," and "[t]he people are pretty well supplied with [farm] implements and are requiring more each year."²⁵⁷ He stated that there were five day schools on the reserve, four run by the Church of England and one by the Roman Catholic Church, but noted that attendance was sporadic (particularly during winter due to the difficulty and danger of crossing the river). He also reported that finding and keeping teachers was difficult due to "low remuneration," stating that "teachers on the reserve receive no support from the band or from the churches." Lewis failed to mention the fact that the spirit of Treaty 1 guaranteed that the Dominion would provide and maintain schools and "schoolmasters" on each reserve, so the "low

²⁵⁵ Lewis's personal role and speculative interest in the dissolution of St. Peter's is discussed briefly in Chapter 3.

²⁵⁶ See for example John Weaver, "Concepts of Economic Improvement and the Social Construction of Property Rights," in John McLaren, A.R. Buck, and Nancy E. Wright (eds.), *Despotic Dominion: Property Rights in British Settler Societies*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005, p. 86-98.

²⁵⁷ Another curious observation for people who "do not make good farmers." Indian Affairs Annual Report, 1907, p. 111.

remuneration” and difficulty of keeping teachers that he noted were entirely the responsibility of the colonial government. Nevertheless, Lewis’s report suggested that there was some attendance of children at the various schools, despite what he called “the indifference” of some parents and family members.²⁵⁸

Under the heading “Characteristics and Progress,” Lewis elaborated on the increasing wage work of the St. Peter’s Indians, particularly “the younger men.” According to Lewis, “[e]mployers of labour from Winnipeg and other places are often on the reserve drumming up men. The freedom from the restraint of the reserve, the association of numbers, and the ready money received in wages, are inducements that easily entice them away.” According to Lewis, this heavy reliance on wage work did not signify a hand-to-mouth existence: “The families are well-supported and all well dressed. The interiors of their houses are fairly well furnished as compared with the same class everywhere. In many of their homes are sewing-machines and organs.”²⁵⁹

According to Tough, “hunting was [by 1900] a relatively insignificant source of income” for Indians in the “Clandeboye Agency,” a district that included the St. Peter’s, Brokenhead, and Fort Alexander (Sagkeeng) reserves. In his estimation, farming and wages had become the principal sources of income, along with revenue derived from gathering (such as berries, cord-wood, and seneca root), as well as sales of craft goods (such as sturgeon nets, mocassins and other leather work).²⁶⁰ Regardless of the source of income, by the turn of the twentieth-century, many St. Peter’s Indians had comfortable, white-washed homes, large numbers of cattle, sheep, and pigs, the latest farm machinery

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 111-12.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 112.

²⁶⁰ Tough, “*As Their Natural Resources Fail*,” p. 209.

and technology, numerous horses and buggies, fishing (and even some recreational) boats, not to mention a very high degree of literacy, and a diversified economy that accounted for the relatively high incomes – and concomitant fashion and other pretensions – of many of the people. In 1900, Ebenezer McColl described his impression of the changes that had occurred at St. Peter's since his first visits to the reserve:

It is almost a quarter of a century since I visited these reserves, and in that time I have seen some marked changes. Twenty-five years ago St. Peter's was nothing but a string of huts and tepees scattered along the banks of the Red River. The people were living upon fish, and spent their time hunting and trapping small game. Their most pretentious vehicle was the Red River cart, whose creaking could be heard for miles crossing the silent prairie. Today there are very few if any thatched-roof houses. The buildings are shingled, well fenced, surrounded by gardens, with stables and storehouses adjoining. Twenty-five years ago the small houses had but one room in which all lived and slept regardless of relationship. Now the houses are divided into compartments.²⁶¹

McColl's recollection of St. Peter's "huts and tepees" in 1875 was perhaps an exaggeration, and contradicted by earlier observations by Isaac Cowie, and even the first CPR "agents" or squatters who founded Selkirk in 1875. According to Frank Tough, approximately two-thirds of the St. Peter's Indians had lived in "good log houses" in 1878.²⁶² Nevertheless, McColl's sense of the overall betterment of housing and life was no doubt informed by real material changes.

In the mid-1880s, Indian Agent Muckle recorded a shift at St. Peter's whereby residents had purchased five sewing machines, two reapers, thirteen mowers, a threshing machine, several buggies as well as driving and lumber wagons that were replacing the old Red River carts.²⁶³ In 1893, Muckle stated that the "St. Peter's Band are getting more independent every year; they are more inclined to look after themselves, and at present

²⁶¹ McColl cited in *Ibid.*, p. 162.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 161.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

are almost if not entirely self-sustaining.”²⁶⁴ Reflecting Lockean values that equated “progress” with private property, Ebenezer McColl declared triumphantly in 1901 that “the Indians of St. Peter’s are far in advance of those of the other two [agency] reserves in the acquirement and possession of personal property.”²⁶⁵ In the Indian Affairs Annual Report for the year in which the St. Peter’s reserve was ostensibly “surrendered,” the Indian Agent described well-built log houses and stables, with shingled roofs, many with brick chimneys, and having spacious and “fairly commodious” interiors.²⁶⁶ The Band was reported to have approximately “160 head of horses and between 600 and 700 head of cattle,” and “those who are engaged in agriculture are fairly well supplied with implements.”²⁶⁷

It is little wonder that most St. Peter’s Indians opposed the surrender of their reserve in the years leading up to 1907, and that Band Councilors had to be persuaded with back-room promises of extra land, money, bonus goods, and augmented political powers, before they would consider endorsing any deal to relocate to a new reserve. It is also little wonder that the “surrender agreement” of 1907 required outright fraud to secure, including but not limited to inadequate notification of meetings, inadequate or non-existent translation, improper voting procedures and tampering, bribery, threats, and alteration of “agreement” terms after the vote. The sheer number and seriousness of these irregularities led the 1911 Royal Commission to declare the “surrender agreement” to be “invalid” and “void.” Despite the restrictions placed upon them by the Indian Act,

²⁶⁴ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 211. Independence and self-sufficiency have long been the bane of colonizers and empire-builders – going back at least to ancient Rome.

²⁶⁵ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 212.

²⁶⁶ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1908, p. 132.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

and other violations of Treaty 1 such as the imposition of game and fishing laws, the St. Peter's Indians had adapted quite well to conditions not of their choosing, and had attained a fairly high level of prosperity and literacy. For more than a century, they had lived upon the same lands and waterways, and drawn their sustenance and income from them. They had by all accounts made substantial "improvements" to their lands, both private lots and commons. The very notion that the St. Peter's Indians would "voluntarily" give up the bountiful land of their ancestors (who were, not incidentally, buried there), and where they *already* had comfortable homes, stables, schools, croplands, irrigation systems, and close access to trade goods and wage work – in exchange for more remote and less-fertile lands, where there were literally no houses, no schools, no health clinics, no lands cleared and ready for farming, no immediate fishing sites, and no nearby stores and employers – is nothing less than ridiculous.

The written text of the "surrender agreement" of 24 September 1907 states that the "Chief and Principal men" of the St. Peter's Reserve, "acting on behalf of the whole peopleDo hereby release, remise, surrender, quit claim, and yield up unto our Sovereign Lord the King, his Heirs and Successors forever ... the whole of the St. Peter's Reserve," an amount of land estimated to be 48,000 acres in total. The text stated that "all monies received from the sale thereof shall, after deducting the usual portion for expenses of management, be paid as follows, namely – one half of said sum so remaining to be paid to us [the Band] the year following the receipt of same by the government after sale of said lands, the balance of said proceeds of sale to be funded for our benefit and the interest paid to us annually." Out of the reserve lands surrendered, the Chief was to receive 180 acres of private, patentable land, the ex-Chief and current Councilors were to

receive 120 acres each, and all other Band members were to receive 80 acres (or in proportion up or down) for each family of five. In addition to these private holdings, 3,000 acres of common hay lands were to be set aside for the Band as a whole, although Indian Affairs was allowed "from time to time [to] reduce the quantity of hay land" as Indians with private patents sold their holdings, and no longer needed it. The written text also stated: "A new reserve shall be selected for this Band on Lake Winnipeg to the extent of 75,000 acres of available land but shall not include more than ten miles water frontage."²⁶⁸

In addition to the provisions on the disposal of reserve lands, assignment of private lands and patents, and the promise of a new reserve, the written text of the 1907 surrender stated that the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) would "advance at the time of the surrender the sum of \$5,000.00, to be repaid out of the first moneys received from the sale of the lands." Furthermore, it stated that treaty payments and annual food rations at treaty time would continue after the surrender. Regarding assistance in moving and rebuilding at the new reserve, the text stated: "A reasonable supply of agricultural implements and tools for use on the new Reserve shall be supplied and distributed at the discretion of the Department. The Department is to render reasonable assistance in removing to the new Reserve in summer time in any year within five years of the date of this surrender. Reasonable assistance in building on the new Reserve shall be rendered

²⁶⁸ The written text of the 1907 surrender is included as "Exhibit 2" in PAM, MG4 D5, "Evidence & Proceedings of Prosecutions of Indians for trespass on Old St. Peter's Reserve, 1934."

by and at the discretion of the Department; but any assistance so given is to be once and for all.”²⁶⁹

As with Treaty 1, the written text of the 1907 “surrender agreement” does not reflect the whole spirit and meaning of the negotiations, the verbal promises made, nor the fact that “consent” was manufactured by a fundamental fraud. But even if we take the written text as the starting point for a discussion of the implementation of the surrender terms, it is clear that the Dominion and DIA did not fulfill the minimal responsibilities they defined for themselves. “Reasonable” assistance was not forthcoming in supplying agricultural implements or aiding (let alone engaging in) construction efforts at the new reserve.

St. Peter’s Indians were promised housing assistance at their new reserve, but early arrivals reported that there was no housing in place in advance, and assistance for those wanting to build was almost non-existent (consisting of a few supplies, like boards and nails). According to Albert Thompson, who wrote about his own family’s relocation in 1909: “Unlike long-established St. Peter’s Parish there were no houses here, no broken land, neither school nor church.”²⁷⁰ Thompson noted that people had to live in tents while they cut logs for their new homes, racing against time to build houses, gather wood and hay, before the onset of winter. The only store was at Fisher River eight miles away, and the nearest town was Gimli, which Thompson suggested was a ten or eleven day round trip. There was no employment near the new reserve, apart from wood-cutting. The back-breaking work of clearing land for gardens and crops had to be done from

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Thompson, *Chief Peguis and His Descendants*, p. 46.

scratch, and Thompson maintained that the Dominion did not even supply promised agricultural implements or seed.²⁷¹ Furthermore, Thompson stated that

The Saulteaux received only \$5000.00 and 73,000 acres of new land at the time of the St. Peter's surrender in 1908, yet Band funds had to be used to pay for the relocation of the people. Materials for homes and farm machinery had to be purchased out of that money to get the people started.²⁷²

Thompson also noted that those who relocated early from St. Peter's had to build their own schools and churches. Many children (himself included) had to attend school at the Fisher River Reserve many miles away for at least two years, between 1909 and 1911, before the first log school house could be completed in September 1911. Church services for Christians were held in people's houses until 1911, then in the school until 1922, when Thompson indicates the first church was built.²⁷³

Thompson's recollection of early conditions at the new Peguis reserve is reinforced by the testimony of many community members to the 1911 Royal Commission that was set-up in response to Indian grievances and petitions in the immediate wake of the September 1907 "agreement." Even some of the Band Councilors, who signed the surrender document against the wishes of their own people, confirmed that crucial promises were not kept. For example, William Prince himself, who had been Chief at the time of the surrender, cited non-fulfillment of promises – particularly, housing construction and agricultural assistance – as the reason for his newfound opposition to the surrender.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 47-48.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 57.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 55-61.

²⁷⁴ Testimony of William Prince, St. Peter's Reserve Commission (Manitoba), *St. Peter's Reserve Commission: Transcript of Evidence*, Royal Commission, 1911, p. 57-58.

Benita Cohen's study of the early history and development of health services at the Peguis reserve also contains many insights into post-removal conditions, and was based in part on extensive interviews with community members. Cohen's narrative suggests that there was neither road, nor railroad, to the new reserve when the first people began to relocate after 1909, making the journey itself quite difficult: "Most people appear to have taken the northern route, by boat, to Fisher Bay, and then they traveled south along the Fisher River by oxen because the bush was too rough for horses." Cohen notes that "[t]hey had few supplies, and the task of clearing the land and building homes was not an easy one."²⁷⁵ An Indian Affairs report from 1909 reinforces aspects of the picture painted by Cohen and Thompson. It described the Fisher River where it intersected the new reserve as "a small stream, about fifty feet wide, shallow, with a stony bed, scarcely of sufficient depth of water to float a canoe in the summer."²⁷⁶ This suggests that the Fisher River's comparative utility to the Red River in terms of both fishing and transportation left something to be desired. Furthermore, the report characterized the new reserve's land as "meadow-land, with swamp in places," and stated that it would need to be drained before it could be converted into "good agricultural land."²⁷⁷

According to Cohen, the majority of those who relocated to Peguis "were those who had already converted to Christianity," an assertion consistent with Thompson's own recollections about early life at Peguis. Significantly, Cohen argues that St. Peter's

²⁷⁵ Benita E. Cohen, "The Development of Health Services in Peguis First Nation: A Descriptive Case Study." Thesis (M. Sc.): University of Manitoba, 1994, p. 48-49.

²⁷⁶ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1909, p. 122.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

Indians who “resisted assimilationist efforts may have left St. Peter’s during this period and gone to some of the Reserves in the region where *Midewiwin* ceremonies and resistance to Christian conversion persisted.”²⁷⁸ As a consequence, Cohen states, “there is no evidence that a *Midewiwin* ceremony was ever held on the Peguis Reserve in the years following relocation.”²⁷⁹ This suggests that the St. Peter’s removal may have sharpened divisions and further shattered the community along spiritual lines.

Conditions were hard in these early years. There was no railroad to the nearby town of Hodgson until 1914, and Cohen states that the infamous “pass system” – which originated in 1885, and was designed to regulate movement and confine Aboriginal people to reserves – was applied to Peguis, and remained in place until the 1930s.²⁸⁰ According to Indian Affairs, about thirty-five families had moved from St. Peter’s to the new reserve by early 1910, but despite the onset of winter “only a few buildings have been erected there.” The same report noted that there was “a marked decrease in the number of cattle in Peguis reserve.”²⁸¹ The sparse description by the Indian Agent suggests that those Indians who relocated to Peguis in the summer of 1909 were expected to build their own homes, and provide their own sustenance. In other words, left entirely to their own devices, most of the first families to move did not have housing in time for winter. The decline in livestock noted may have been a reflection of the difficulty of transporting large numbers of animals without roads or railways, but it is also possible that people were forced to slaughter much of the livestock they did bring for food during

²⁷⁸ Cohen, “Development of Health Services in Peguis,” p. 58.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

²⁸¹ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report for the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1910, p. 115.

these difficult years. It should be noted, however, that Indian Affairs reports conflicted with one another on the question of housing construction and assistance. Under the general heading for "Clandeboye Agency," the same Annual Report asserted that "thirty-four new houses of first-class appearance and workmanship" had been built at the new Peguis reserve by the end of March 1910.²⁸² The 1910 report does not say who built and paid for these "first-class" houses, but the following year the Indian Agent asserted that "every assistance has been given to enable them to construct houses and settle down on excellent land."²⁸³

According to Cohen, health care services at the new reserve were almost non-existent until 1932. When the first St. Peter's people were relocated in 1909, the physician J.R. Steep requested that he be allowed to continue to serve them, and recommended that he be allowed to conduct quarterly visits to both the Peguis and Fisher River Reserves. Unfortunately, Cohen notes, "there is no written evidence that this actually occurred."²⁸⁴ Steep had been the head DIA physician for the Clandeboye Agency, based at the St. Peter's Dynevor Hospital, an institution run by the Church Missionary Society on the St. Peter's Reserve.²⁸⁵ Health care services at St. Peter's may not have been perfect, but there were on-reserve facilities, and easy access to both Selkirk and Winnipeg. By contrast, health care provision in the earliest days at Peguis consisted of "on call" doctors living anywhere from 30 to 170 kilometres away – an absurdity at the best of times, but made even worse when one considers that these doctors were "on call"

²⁸² Ibid., p. 144.

²⁸³ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1911, p. 146.

²⁸⁴ Cohen, "Development of Health Services in Peguis," p. 59.

²⁸⁵ Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1911, p. 146.

solely at Indian Agent request, not at the request of those actually needing medical attention. Elders interviewed by Cohen recalled that this absence of doctors meant that people had to make arduous journeys through the bush on horseback to the town of Arborg – a 4 to 6-day round trip – in order to see the nearest physician. After the railway came to Hodgson, the Indian Agent “might” authorize a trip to Winnipeg for a serious illness, but the decision still rested with the Indian Agent, not the person needing medical attention.²⁸⁶ There was no physician based at Peguis until Dr. James Bird was posted there in 1924.²⁸⁷

In 1930 the government opened a “nursing station” at the new Peguis reserve. It was called the Fisher River Nursing Station, due to its location on the banks of the river, and it was intended to serve all three reserves in the Fisher River Agency (Peguis, Fisher River, and Jackhead). Elders interviewed at Peguis recalled that a “Miss Brandon” was the first, and perhaps only nurse to work out of this station.²⁸⁸ It was not until 1940 that the first hospital was built on the Peguis Reserve. Known as the Fisher River Indian Hospital, it was intended to serve all the Interlake reserves. According to Cohen, the primary purpose of the hospital, from the government point of view, appears to have been the eradication of tuberculosis, but it was also supposed to provide general medical care to the people of the region. The original government statistics suggest that the hospital had a 24-bed capacity, with half ostensibly reserved for TB patients. However, Peguis elders recalled that there were actually between 32 and 38 beds crammed into the facility.

²⁸⁶ Cohen, “Development of Health Services in Peguis,” p. 60-61.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63-64.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 67-68.

The hospital was one of the first buildings at Peguis to have both electricity and a telephone.²⁸⁹

Cohen's study suggests that, despite the chronic under-funding of health care at Peguis between 1909 and the 1930s, there was "an alternate medical system" that people relied upon, which continued to function into the 1930s. While most of the people who relocated from St. Peter's were Christian converts – and thus traditional spiritual ceremonies such as the *Midewiwin* do not appear to have been carried out at the new location – Cohen argues that "the curing aspect of traditional medicine did remain intact." She shows that not only were traditional herbal remedies still in use by the Indians, but two different Indian healing practitioners continued to operate at the new Reserve: "Indian doctors" and midwives.²⁹⁰

Overall, Cohen argues that there was an "active form of underdevelopment" at Peguis, one that included prohibitions on the sale or barter of both livestock and produce without the expressed permission of the Indian Agent.²⁹¹ Citing the federal Hawthorn Report of 1966, which studied the social, economic, and educational status of Aboriginal peoples in general, and included an assessment of Peguis, Cohen summarized the deplorable statistics: by 1964 per capita income at Peguis was \$99, the third-lowest of the 35 reserves surveyed; 100% of the households were receiving welfare; only 1% of households had running water or indoor toilets; only 40% had electricity; almost half the population was under the age of 16; and only 4% had any education past grade nine. Peguis was classified in the Hawthorn Report as one of the poorest reserves in

²⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 75-77.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 72.

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 50.

Manitoba.²⁹² According to Cohen, living standards and health and welfare statistics did not significantly improve at Peguis until the 1980s and 1990s, after decades of what she characterized as “gross neglect.” Her narrative suggests that many of the deaths from disease (in particular, tuberculosis and influenza) that occurred at Peguis in the first half of the twentieth-century were directly related to the “gross neglect” and, in effect, de-development at the heart of the St. Peter’s removal. In her words:

[F]ollowing the relocation of the Band to Peguis Reserve after 1909, it is possible to trace a steady decline in the economic and social development of the community. ... [T]he oral histories obtained (and some archival documentation) suggest that the Reserve’s economic decline was accompanied by a gradual deterioration of the physical and social health of the community as well. There is also evidence ... that the underdevelopment of Peguis Reserve was *not* due to an inability of the people to adjust to a new way of life – but rather, that it was the result of government policies which undermined the economic and social growth of the community.²⁹³

Cohen concluded the historical component of her study by stating that colonialism and the St. Peter’s removal combined to transform “a once-self-sufficient community to a state of almost total dependence in less than half a century.”²⁹⁴

The St. Peter’s removal took much longer to complete than hitherto appreciated, and like the Trail of Tears in the United States, there were multiple waves of removal. Most St. Peter’s Indians did not move after the 1907 “surrender agreement.” The first families who moved after 1909 were few and appear to have been primarily Cree and Christian. Leading Saulteaux families, such as the Princes, also appear to have relocated early. Indian Affairs personnel had insisted that no one could run for Council, vote, or collect annuities unless they moved to the new reserve – an imposition that placed

²⁹² Ibid., p. 52-53.

²⁹³ Ibid., p. 241-42.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

opponents of both the Council and 1907 surrender in a very difficult position. Despite this imposition most people did not move in those early years. Five years after the “surrender” Indian Affairs officials reported that 800 out of 1,212 St. Peter’s Indians (or roughly two-thirds) remained at the old reserve.²⁹⁵ This figure is itself problematic, given that the DIA had been defining Indians out of existence since the Indian Act of 1876, and given the fact that many people had felt compelled to move elsewhere. Nevertheless, it indicates that there was a reluctance to move to the new location.

It is clear that opposition to the surrender was immediate and sustained, and St. Peter’s Indians welcomed the support of those, like Selkirk’s Conservative Party MP George Bradbury, who helped raise the profile of their case inside and out of the House of Commons. In January 1908, three months after they ostensibly consented to give up their reserve, St. Peter’s residents petitioned the Dominion and demanded an election to remove the current Chief and Council.²⁹⁶ In November 1909, George Bradbury received a petition from 110 members (all men) of the St. Peter’s Band, spelling out the unscrupulous tactics used to secure the surrender.²⁹⁷ Bradbury’s initial attacks on the Liberal government’s handling of the St. Peter’s issue led to an internal Indian Affairs investigation that resulted in a departmental whitewash which “provided little suggestion of wrong-doing,” and even alleged that many Indians had been “overpaid” for their lands.²⁹⁸ However, neither Bradbury nor the St. Peter’s Indians themselves relented.

²⁹⁵ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1912, p. 116-120.

²⁹⁶ Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 454.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 467.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 471-72.

Opponents of the surrender continued to try to impeach their own Band Chief and Council, arguing that they had been “bought off” in order to bring about the “ruination of the St. Peter’s reserve.”²⁹⁹ These efforts were actively thwarted by Dominion officials, including Indian Affairs personnel who were ostensibly obligated to act on behalf of their “wards” interests. Indian Agent J.O. Lewis simply lied to John Flett, one of the leaders of the St. Peter’s opposition, stating that no provision existed in law to allow such an election. When Lewis was given direct orders to proceed with an election, he did everything in his power to stall or undermine it, and managed to bring about an official consensus that no new election could be called until *all St. Peter’s Indians* had moved to the new location on Fisher River – a clear victory for the corrupt Band Council, given that core opposition leaders wanted to stay at St. Peter’s. Nevertheless, a petition from June 1909 stated that Band members would not move to a new reserve until given the opportunity to vote for a new Chief and Council. Even Agency Inspector S. Swinford acknowledged that the Chief and Council had zero popular support due to being “pampered and probably bribed by the people of Selkirk and in particular the land buyers.”³⁰⁰

In June 1910, the *Winnipeg Tribune* printed a letter from William Asham and other St. Peter’s residents to George Bradbury, praising the latter for his work on behalf of the people, specifically for bringing to light the “shameful” manner in which the Indians had been defrauded of their birthright.³⁰¹ The *Tribune* also printed a long article based on interviews with Asham, in which the grievances about the land swindle, the

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 458.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 457-59.

³⁰¹ “Selkirk Indians Support Bradbury,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 6 June 1910, p. 4.

coercion of Band leadership, and the non-fulfillment of promises were laid out (including non-payment of the promised \$90 per person). Significantly, the article stated that even St. Peter's Indians who had already moved to the new reserve had threatened to return to their original homeland if promises were not kept and justice not served. It noted that many Indians had already refused to take their treaty payment at the new reserve, and would not take it until they were paid for the sale of their lands at St. Peter's – a refusal that sufficiently infuriated Indian Agent J.O. Lewis that he withheld promised food rations. The article noted that even those who had originally agreed to the surrender now considered it void due to the fact of non-payment alone, and “[u]nless we get it by July 25 we are going to move back on to the reserve, for the lands there belong to us as we have not been paid for them.”³⁰²

Later that same month William Asham stated again to the *Tribune*: “We have appealed to every possible source against the unjust manner in which we have been treated but can get no satisfaction.” Asham went on to threaten “an appeal to the king [of England]” as a final recourse. The article noted that Asham was “a well read man” for whom truth and accuracy were extremely important, and indicated that he carried around with him copies of the parliamentary Hansard, in order to cite facts about the St. Peter's case.³⁰³ Some of the principal charges and grievances were spelled out in another article in the fall of 1910, in which Asham – described as “probably the most eloquent Indian in Canada” – and J.H. Prince were acknowledged as having “the overwhelming support of

³⁰² “Indians Say They Did Not Get All Their Money: J.H. Asham, From St. Peter's and Fisher River Reserves Claims That the Indians Were Fooled Through Their Head Men,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 11 June 1910, p. 2.

³⁰³ “Indians Will Appeal to King of England: Redmen from St. Peter's Reserve Are Not Satisfied Over Disposal of Their Lands and Will Take Drastic Measures to Enforce Their Rights,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 28 June 1910, p. 7.

the audience” at St. Peter’s. The article relayed Asham’s view that the reserve had only been surrendered “through trickery and bribery,” but quoted the Indian Agent’s patronizing response. He dismissed the Indians’ indignation over the “surrender agreement,” their “emotional” attachment to their lost land, and the heated nature of the controversy that had carried over into the media, as indicative of a loss of “native dignity” caused by too much proximity to white men. The article concluded that “[t]he discontented faction is being led by ex-Chief Asham, who will undoubtedly be elected chief as soon as the authorities allow an election,” and stated that *supporters* of the surrender were “only a very small number of Indians.”³⁰⁴

In early 1911, eighty-seven St. Peter’s Band members signed a petition calling upon Premier Roblin and the provincial (Tory) government to undertake a formal investigation, arguing that the Province would be held liable for certifying titles to stolen land. The petition was reinforced when W.E. Macara, the Provincial Registrar of Lands, stated that his office would not certify land titles until the dispute, and explosion of lawsuits that were before the courts, were resolved.³⁰⁵ When the federal Liberals rejected Bradbury’s call in the House of Commons for a *federal* Royal Commission, the Roblin government announced it would create a *provincial* Royal Commission, headed by three County Court judges. St. Peter’s Band opposition was immediately strengthened. At a meeting with Indian Agent John Watson (who had just replaced J.O. Lewis) in April 1911, William Asham, John Flett, and William Henderson announced that there would be no further movement to the new reserve until after the proposed Royal Commission had

³⁰⁴ “Much Discontent Among Indians,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 1 November 1910, p. 1.

³⁰⁵ Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 492-93.

released its report – a newfound resolve that Watson attributed to “outside” influences and meddling.³⁰⁶

The St. Peter’s Indians were also encouraged in their refusal to abandon their homeland when the 1911 Provincial Royal Commission declared the surrender to be “invalid” and therefore “void.”³⁰⁷ According to Tyler, Wright and Daniel, the Commission’s final decision was based largely on its interpretation of “the statutory provisions for Indian reserve surrenders,” as outlined in Section 49 of the Indian Act, and declared that these provisions had been “violated both in letter and in spirit.”³⁰⁸ The Royal Commission declared the surrender “illegal” under the colonizer’s own laws, while overlooking the fundamental illegitimacy of colonialism. Even in finding the surrender invalid, however, the Royal Commission was infused with an assumption of government “good intentions” and Indian “weakness.” The majority decision bent over backwards to exonerate Indian Agent John Semmens of ill-intent, and presupposed an Indian “weakness” of character that allowed them to be manipulated: “We have no reason to doubt the honesty of the intention of this reverend gentleman [Semmens], but we cannot help deeply regretting that such a strong appeal to the weakness of an Indian for a ready cash payment was made at such a moment.” Furthermore, the bag holding \$5,000 in cash that Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs Frank Pedley had brought to the surrender meeting in 1907 was referred to as follows: “This allurements was too strong for the already

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 493-96.

³⁰⁷ See “Claim Surrender is Invalid: Majority Report Declares Against Methods Employed in Securing Indian Reserve,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 January 1912, p. 1; “The Majority Report: By Judges Locke and Prud’homme,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 January 1912, p.1.

³⁰⁸ Tyler et. al., “Illegal Surrender,” p. 532-34.

weakened will power of these poor wards of the government.”³⁰⁹ The Commission did not point out that Parliament had amended the Indian Act in 1906 precisely to increase the amount of money available to induce Indian “consent,” and that St. Peter’s was the first testing ground for these new provisions.³¹⁰

Unfortunately, the 1911 Royal Commission was little more than a speed bump in the path of settlers and land speculators. Dr. O.I. Grain, who had been described by the Commission’s dissenting judge Robert Hill Myers as a Selkirk “old-timer” and “friend” of the St. Peter’s Indians,³¹¹ was interviewed in the *Tribune* in one of the first “citizen” responses to the Royal Commission. Grain described the majority decision as “very unfortunate for this district,” and insisted that all the Indians at the new reserve were doing just fine: “I talked to many of them and no one wants to come back. They are doing well and have got a good bargain.”³¹² The overall tone of the article and interviewees was one of a *fait accompli*. Similarly, a news brief in the back pages of the same issue discussed further responses to the Commission findings in the Selkirk district – interviewing whites, not St. Peter’s Indians – stating that the report was “not received with much favour here among many citizens.” The newspaper report concluded as follows:

The hope is, however, that even in the face of irregularities, some way will be found to confirm the abandonment of the reserve by the Indians, see that the Indians get fair treatment, and make an early settlement of the troubles that are

³⁰⁹ “The Majority Report,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 January 1912, p. 1.

³¹⁰ The 1906 amendment to the Indian Act allowed up to 50% of the proceeds of any surrender to be distributed immediately to band members.

³¹¹ “Minority Report,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 January 1912, p. 1.

³¹² “Opinions Differ as to Effect of Judges’ Findings,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 January 1912, p. 1.

retarding settlement in the Selkirk district. The citizens do not want the Indians back, under any condition.³¹³

Given that most St. Peter's Indians had not yet left their reserve, this declaration on the part of the "citizens" of Selkirk was not a call to bar the Indians from returning, but rather a renewed demand for the expulsion of indigenous peoples – regardless of the "irregularities" or violations of the colonizers' own laws.

Selkirk colonizers had good reason to be hopeful. As Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior and Superintendent General of Indian Affairs (1905-11), had stated in reference to *any* reserve surrender, "if it becomes a question between the Indians and the whites, the interests of the whites will have to be provided for."³¹⁴ In response to the 1911 Royal Commission, Oliver stated: "If the contention of the majority finding that a surrender could only be carried by a majority of all the qualified voters [of a given Indian Band] be correct and according to law, *then practically every surrender since the time of confederation was illegal* and the titles were no good."³¹⁵ Oliver was thus confident that the St. Peter's surrender would have to stand, because the contrary implication – that all the others surrenders and dispossessions would have to be canceled – was, in his mind, an absurdity.

Between the release of the 1911 Royal Commission and the St. Peter's Reserve Act of 1916 there was a period of intense settler pressure – perhaps the greatest of the entire St. Peter's controversy, precisely because the dispossession did not appear inevitable, and because the St. Peter's Indians themselves had stepped up their resistance. The St. Peter's "issue" became the dominant electoral issue in the Selkirk district, and it

³¹³ "The Selkirk View of the Case," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 4 January 1912, p. 11.

³¹⁴ Oliver cited in Canada, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Vol. 1, p 230-31.

³¹⁵ Oliver cited in Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 561. Emphasis added.

did not take long for a bi-partisan (Liberal and Conservative) settler consensus to emerge that the surrender ought to be upheld. Perhaps most indicative of this shift was George Bradbury himself. The man who had made a name for himself championing the rights of St. Peter's Indians (a constituency that could not even vote for him), became decidedly less vocal when he moved from the opposition to the government side of Parliament. Bradbury had become increasingly unpopular in his electoral district, and was routinely denounced by settlers and land speculators in both the Selkirk and Winnipeg newspapers after the 1911 Royal Commission.³¹⁶ Bradbury's own five-page letter to the Secretary of Indian Affairs (dated 14 May 1913) is emblematic of this building settler consensus. He continued to insist that the St. Peter's Indians had been "defrauded" and "fleeced" of their birthright. But Bradbury's letter nevertheless concluded with a call for a timely settlement of the controversy in the interests of "the whole district," and suggested that the "public" be granted an opportunity to acquire the Indian lands by "fair competition."³¹⁷ By "public" it is clear that Bradbury meant the "ordinary" white settler, as opposed to "foreign" land speculators such as George Funk, a distinction he made clear in many public statements. Nevertheless, Bradbury began to appeal to white voters in his district by demanding a "public auction" of St. Peter's Indian lands.

By 1916, the federal Conservatives under Borden had completely caved to settler and speculative interests on the ground. In the House of Commons, Arthur Meighen (MP for Portage La Prairie) promised to introduce legislation that would confirm St. Peter's land sales without technically acknowledging the surrender as valid. When St. Peter's

³¹⁶ See, for example, U.S. land buyer George Funk's response to Bradbury in "Voice of the People: Re St. Peter's Reserve Surrender," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 15 September 1913, p. 4.

³¹⁷ Tyler et. al., "Illegal Surrender," p. 571-74.

Indians protested the deal struck between the Dominion and land buyers (whereby the latter agreed to pay an extra \$1 per acre if the former recognized their titles), Meighen declared that Indian consent was irrelevant because the government was their “trustee.” On 17 April 1916 the St. Peter’s Reserve Act was passed in the House of Commons, allowing land buyers to begin confirming their titles. Blaming the Liberals for the whole mess, the Tories promised to throw an extra \$40,000 into the St. Peter’s Band coffers, and stated that the Indians would have to take it or leave it.³¹⁸

Despite the unjust treatment they received after 1871, the theft of their original homeland at St. Peter’s, the concerted and ultimately-successful attempts to push them onto ever-more remote lands, and the resultant demoralization and breakdown in social cohesion that ethnic cleansing necessarily entails, the St. Peter’s Indians actually sent substantial numbers of volunteers to join the Canadian army during World War I.

According to one Indian Affairs assessment from 1919, Manitoba’s First Nations had “an excellent enlistment record:”

Notable among these is the Peguis band, which sent twenty men to the front from a total adult male population of one hundred and eighteen, eleven of whom were killed in action, four wounded and gassed, three wounded, and one taken prisoner. ... The St. Peter’s band sent thirty-three men to the front from a total adult male population of one hundred and twenty-seven, seven of whom were killed in action, eight wounded, and one gassed.³¹⁹

This description is significant for more than one reason. First, it suggests that 53 out of an estimated 245 adult males from Peguis and St. Peter’s enlisted to fight (or roughly 21.6%). Second, it suggests that most St. Peter’s Indians had still not relocated to the new reserve at Peguis.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 584-85.

³¹⁹ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1919, p. 18-19.

In 1927, to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Canadian Confederation, the Department of Indian Affairs produced a report on “The Canadian Indians After Sixty Years of Confederation.” This report described how treaties were entered into “whereby the native title was extinguished” throughout the “northwest,” and in return for this “cession,”

ample reserves were set aside for the Indians; annual cash payments provided and assistance given for the promotion of agriculture, stock-raising, and other pursuits. In addition to this, the Government undertook the education of their children as in other parts of the Dominion. *The treaties have been fulfilled and the Government has in fact gone far beyond their terms in its efforts to care for the Indians and advance their welfare.*³²⁰

In addition to asserting the preposterous claim that the Dominion had honoured its treaty obligations, and in fact, gone “far beyond their terms” in its ceaseless effort to do right by indigenous peoples, the report recalled the “traditional loyalty of the Indians to the British Crown” – citing the events of 1776 and 1812 – that “was again evidenced in the Great War.” In total, the report stated that “[m]ore than 4,000 Indians enlisted for overseas service. Many were killed in action for the defence of the Empire and a number were decorated for gallantry in action.”³²¹ The report concluded that: “On the whole it may be said that the Indians have reason to be grateful to the Canadian Government for the benefits and consideration that they have received.”³²²

The St. Peter’s Reserve was dissolved only by fraud and coercion, against the clear and sustained desires of the majority of its people. It was not only a violation of Treaty 1, but “illegal” according to the colonizers’ own ostensible laws – laws which

³²⁰ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31, 1927, p. 9. Emphasis added.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid., p. 10.

were sometimes amended or ignored when they were found to be un-conducive to greater land acquisition or unpopular with voters. Given this history, it is hard to imagine what would sustain the much-heralded “traditional loyalty” of the St. Peter’s Indians, let alone motivate more than twenty percent of St. Peter’s men to enlist in World War I.

Furthermore, St. Peter’s war veterans not only failed to qualify for benefits and programs available to “ordinary” Canadian soldiers, but they were rewarded – only ten years after the first people had relocated to Peguis – by government efforts in early 1919 to expropriate parts of *their new reserve* for a soldier re-settlement scheme. According to Sarah Carter, the Soldier Settlement Board (SSB) “acquired over 85,000 acres of Indian reserve land in Western Canada for non-Aboriginal soldier settlement in the years immediately after World War I.” When St. Peter’s Indians at the new reserve at Peguis caught wind of this proposal in May 1919, they expressed immediate opposition, citing both their military service and the still-unresolved status of the St. Peter’s surrender in their resolution against further land alienations.³²³

One of these St. Peter’s veterans of World War I, a Saulteaux man named Henry Pahkoo, participated in an organized repatriation movement in the early 1930s. In July 1932, a large group of mostly-Saulteaux Indians from Peguis Reserve traveled south and re-occupied parts of the St. Peter’s Reserve. Estimates of the number of Saulteaux involved ranged from twenty-five to thirty-five families. Their arrival caused immediate and widespread consternation among local white settlers, who called upon Indian Affairs officials and police to expel the Indians as “trespassers.” One of the leaders and elders

³²³ Sarah Carter, “‘An Infamous Proposal:’ Prairie Indian Reserve Land and Soldier Settlement After World War I,” *Manitoba History* No. 37 (Spring / Summer 1999), p. 9, 18.

involved was known as Naynahkawekonape, or Alex Greyeyes, a former Chief of the St. Peter's Indians, who maintained that the terms of the 1907 surrender were never carried out, money was never paid, and assistance promised was withheld. More than this, Greyeyes maintained that the surrender itself was a violation of Treaty 1. A newspaper quoted Greyeyes' own perspective on the intentions of the repatriation movement:

We came back to St. Peter's reserve because we want our rights and because we have not had our rights since 1907. Now that we are here to get our reserve back again, the Indian department sends mounted policemen to tell us we are trespassing.³²⁴

According to Angus Prince: "Our chief, Alick Grayeyes, was jailed on account of fighting for his rights."³²⁵ Other St. Peter's spokespersons and participants expressed similar sentiments and arguments. Anonymous Band members interviewed by journalists stated "that there was no purpose in going back, since the reserve set aside for them 25 years ago [at Peguis] is swampy, without trees, game, fish or hay for their horses." The article went on to relay Indian charges that the 1907 surrender "was illegal under the terms of the Stone Fort treaty of 1871," and that the vote taken to secure the surrender in 1907 was unduly influenced by asking all those who wanted \$90 to stand on the "yes" side.³²⁶

The Saulteaux remained on their lands at St. Peter's from July to October 1932, in defiance of colonial authorities, before being convinced to return to Peguis. Media

³²⁴ "Orders of Officials Are Defied By Indians: Families of Peguis Band Refuse to Vacate Tribal Reserve of St. Peter's: Have Been Encamped 12 Miles North of Selkirk Since July 18," clipping (newspaper and date unknown), PAM, MG4 D5, "Newspaper Clippings, Trespass 1932-1933."

³²⁵ Angus Prince, "Saulteaux Indians and the St. Peter's Reserve," PAM, MG4 D5, "Newspaper Clippings, Trespass 1932-1933."

³²⁶ Fisher River Tribe Prepare for Winter at Old Reserve: Indians Determined to Stay on Hay Lands, Claiming Rights Taken From Them," clipping (newspaper and date unknown), PAM, MG4 D5, "Newspaper Clippings, Trespass 1932-1933."

reports were quick to adopt the perspective of Indian Affairs officials, police, court magistrates, and local Selkirk settlers that the Indians were simply “trespassers” and “squatters.” In late September 1932, the *Winnipeg Tribune* reported that “50 Peguis Indians” were still camped on their old reserve at St. Peter’s, and that R.C.M.P. were attempting “to induce them to go back to their own reserve,” because they were on land “which belongs to settlers.” The article conceded that the land “once belonged to the Indians,” but maintained that “the Indians [had] surrendered the land ... in return for a cash payment.” The article was dripping with colonial paternalism and arrogance, as when an Inspector Mellor of the RCMP was reported as having to “patiently” explain “the why and wherefores of property rights” to the Indians.³²⁷ In reality, the Indians knew precisely whose land they were on, and it was the RCMP and colonizers who needed to have “property rights” explained to them.

Two days later the *Winnipeg Tribune* reported: “Today two R.C.M.P. officers moved about 20 families of Salteaux Indians from Peguis off the hay lands at St. Peter’s, where they have been trespassing since July. The natives now are squatting along the road allowance.” It went on to state unequivocally that the “discontented Salteaux, now encamped *on land not belonging to them* ... asserted the other day that the Peguis reserve was without hay, game, fish or wood. An informant of *The Tribune* said today that this was incorrect.” The newspaper relayed as fact the following rebuttal: “As on other Indian reserves, Indians at Peguis reserve have free schools where a mid-day meal is supplied pupils, free medical, nursing and hospital attention, free clothing and free grain,

³²⁷ “Band of Indians Descends on Reserve Near Selkirk, Demanding Right to Cut Hay: R.C.M.P. Fail to Convince Natives They Have No Right to Hay Lands,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 20 September 1932 (clipping), PAM, MG4 D5, “Newspaper Clippings, Trespass 1932-1933.”

potatoes and vegetables for seed.” The article’s explanation for the return of the Indians to St. Peter’s amounted to electoral sour grapes. It flatly asserted that the Saulteaux moved to St. Peter’s when their favoured candidate (Alex Greyeyes) lost the recent Band election at Peguis.³²⁸

The next day another article asserted that the RCMP were acting under the authority of the Department of Indian Affairs when they forced the St. Peter’s Indians off their “old” reserve. It stated that the Indians “had been trespassing on hay lands forfeited through a treaty signed in 1907 by Crees and Saulteaux Indians.” Saulteaux “complaints” were dismissed as nothing new. In addition to electoral sour grapes, the article advanced a further explanation to account for the repatriation movement: “that two tribes – Saulteaux and Crees – must perforce live together.”³²⁹ This theme of ethnic division and “tribal” prejudice was picked up by other newspaper accounts. One article stated that “[t]ribal differences are understood by the department of Indian affairs to be at the bottom of the so-called ‘rebellion’ of Indians who have left the new reserve at Fisher River to trek back to the old St. Peter’s reserve near Selkirk.” It described the Saulteaux involved as “disaffected braves” and declared them to be “a minority faction,” who could not abide sharing their assigned reserve at Peguis with the Crees. The article concluded by alleging

³²⁸ “Failure to Re-elect Chief Blamed for Trek of Indians: 20 Families of Trespassing Saulteaux Removed by R.C.M.P.,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 22 September 1932 (date handwritten on clipping), PAM, MG4 D5, “Newspaper Clippings, Trespass 1932-1933.”

³²⁹ “Ottawa Order Ousted Indians at St. Peter’s: Trespassing on Hay Lands Forfeited by Treaty Cause of Action,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, 23 September 1932 (clipping, date inferred), PAM, MG4 D5, “Newspaper Clippings, Trespass 1932-1933.”

that the Saulteaux found it “impossible for the two groups to live harmoniously together.”³³⁰

In early April 1933 dozens of Saulteaux families returned once again to their original homeland, prompting a telegraph to A.G. Hamilton, Inspector of Indian Agencies in Winnipeg, requesting immediate action “to prevent trespass.”³³¹ On May 1, Hamilton received the following written “authorization” from the office of the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in Ottawa: “If these trespassers continue to ignore your instructions and defy your authority, you are authorized to take such action as may be considered necessary to enforce their removal and return to the Peguis Reserve.”³³² The Saulteaux soon faced extensive charges of “criminal trespass” in the Selkirk district Police Court. In early June, a number of the St. Peter’s Indians were “found guilty of trespassing before Magistrate Welsford” in Selkirk, but there was a widespread refusal to move, and Angus Prince, one of the Saulteaux participants involved, attempted to raise the profile of their case by personally addressing the media.³³³ On June 12, Indian Agent Gilbert Henry Lavender was dispatched to visit the Indians where they were encamped at Netley Creek, accompanied by a Police constable named John Taylor.³³⁴ It is possible that the immediate trigger for Lavender’s visit was

³³⁰ “Ottawa Hears Tribal Differences Cause,” (date and newspaper unknown), PAM, MG4 D5, “Newspaper Clippings, Trespass 1932-1933.”

³³¹ Exhibit 3, PAM, MG4 D5, “Evidence & Proceedings of Prosecutions of Indians for trespass on Old St. Peter’s Reserve, 1934.”

³³² Exhibit 4, PAM, MG4 D5, “Evidence & Proceedings of Prosecutions of Indians for trespass on Old St. Peter’s Reserve, 1934.”

³³³ “Declares Sale of Reserve Cause of Indians’ Troubles,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 12 June 1933, p. 12.

³³⁴ “The King v. John Manninguay,” 29 September 1933, PAM, MG4 D5, “Evidence & Proceedings of Prosecutions of Indians for trespass on Old St. Peter’s Reserve, 1934,” Booklet 2, p. 1-7.

the *Winnipeg Free Press* article that same day that relayed Prince's perspective.³³⁵ In any case, Lavender attempted to get the people to return to the Peguis reserve, to no avail, a fact that caused consternation among local settlers, and generated further media attention.

Newspaper coverage as well as transcripts of the court proceedings from 1933 and 1934 reveals that the St. Peter's Indians were quite cognizant that a Royal Commission had declared the 1907 surrender to be illegal and void, and many of the Saulteaux also declared both the surrender and the Indian Act itself to be violations of their rights under Treaty 1. It is also clear that many of the "accused" preferred to go to jail than give up the land of their ancestors. Court transcripts suggest that few Indians actually expected justice from the colonizers' courts – a skepticism repeatedly borne out by the statements of legal counsel (for both the Crown *and* Defence), as well as the presiding judge.

The most vocal public critic of the Saulteaux repatriation efforts was a United Church missionary named Fred G. Stevens, who had been a missionary at Fisher River for a quarter-century. On June 15, he wrote a response to Angus Prince's June 12 article, dismissing Prince's contention that "the Indians could not make a living" at Peguis. Stevens' portrait of the Peguis reserve was one of "fine fields of wheat, oats and barley" and "many comfortable farm homes." He stated that "fine herds of cattle were everywhere seen." His explanation for Saulteaux dissatisfaction was based on his personal views as to the different character "traits" of Crees and Saulteaux. According to Stevens, the south half of the Peguis reserve was well-kept by "Swampy Crees and mixed blooded people" who were described as "fairly tractable and industrious" as a rule. In the

³³⁵ "Declares Sale of Reserve Cause of Indians' Troubles," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 12 June 1933, p. 12.

north half of the reserve, Stevens suggested that Saulteaux “neglect” was the rule. He concluded by stating:

There is no truth in the statements said to have been made by Angus Prince regarding the Peguis reserve. The only reason why these people cannot make a comfortable living on the reserve is the same as why they never made an adequate living at St. Peter’s, and that is that *they are intractable, disobedient and idle*.³³⁶

No doubt the missionary’s sweeping and vitriolic assessment of Saulteaux “character” was informed by his own proselytizing record among them, and the fact that Saulteaux Indians at St. Peter’s and elsewhere had long resisted interference in their spiritual beliefs and practices – going back to the days of Reverend Cockran’s “model village” in the mid-eighteenth century.³³⁷ In any case, for the remainder of the summer, Prince and Stevens exchanged public responses to one another in the media, with Prince elaborating on St. Peter’s Indians’ grievances, and Stevens arguing that the Saulteaux had only “their own foolishness” to blame for the loss of St. Peter’s, asserting they had received “extra good treatment” – such as more and “better land” – from the Department of Indian Affairs, and reiterating his view that the Saulteaux were simply lazy.³³⁸

One of the many cases to be heard was *His Majesty The King v. John Manninguay*, held on 29 September 1933. Manninguay was a St. Peter’s man who had

³³⁶ F.G. Stevens, “Indians Do Well on the Peguis Reserve,” June 1933, (date and newspaper unknown, but it was a response to the June 12 article in the *Winnipeg Free Press*), PAM, MG4 D5, “Newspaper Clippings, Trespass 1932-1933.” Emphasis added.

³³⁷ Most Saulteaux did not convert to Christianity, despite Chief Peguis’s own conversion, and missionaries had long been frustrated by their “haughty” belief in the value of their own spiritual traditions. A wonderful example of Ojibwa attitudes towards missionaries is the nicknames that the Indians gave missionary James Settee: “the Pest” and “Talking Too Much.” See Peers, *Ojibwa of Western Canada*, p. 197.

³³⁸ See, for example, Angus Prince, “The Troubles of the Saulteaux Indians,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 30 June 1933 (date inferred); and F.G. Stevens, “The Saulteaux Indians and the Old Reserve,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, (written July 22, but date of publication uncertain), PAM, MG4 D5, “Newspaper Clippings, Trespass 1932-1933.”

returned to St. Peter's with his family, and many other families of Saulteaux, in the spring of 1933. Manninguay appears to have been present at Netley Creek at the time of Lavender's June 12 visit, and he and the others charged with "trespass" may have been singled out simply on the basis of recognition or outspokenness. On September 29, Manninguay appeared before Police Magistrate Henri Lacerte at the Police Court in Selkirk, with Theodore A. Hunt K.C., acting for the Crown. Manninguay spoke little English, and was unrepresented by legal counsel. The Court, however, did allow Angus Prince to act as an informal advocate on Manninguay's behalf, and also appointed a separate interpreter for the proceedings.³³⁹

During Manninguay's hearing, Indian Agent Lavender and Constable Taylor were sworn in, and called upon by the Crown to "establish" that the "accused" and approximately forty-five other Indians had been present at Netley Creek since at least June 12. Edmin Milledge, "Acting Agent" for the Clandeboye Agency, was also sworn in to provide mundane details about the acreage of Netley Creek and surrounding marsh. The Crown (Hunt) asked the following direct question: "This land belongs to whom?" Milledge's answer was unequivocal: "The Department of Indian Affairs." It was left to Angus Prince to challenge this assertion, but he was undermined and over-ruled the moment he mentioned the 1907 surrender as an event that actually occurred:

HUNT: I am objecting. He has now said there was a surrender and it is at that point that I object to anything that occurs prior to the surrender. That document is final. Now he has admitted that the Indians surrendered this land to the Dominion Government and it is Dominion Government land. Now he cannot go behind it and tell us in Court here why it was done and how it was done and I would ask your worship to rule that out of order as not being pertinent to this issue.

³³⁹ "The King v. John Manninguay," 29 September 1933, PAM, MG4 D5, "Evidence & Proceedings of Prosecutions of Indians for trespass on Old St. Peter's Reserve, 1934," Booklet 2, p. 1-26.

COURT: As long as that document exists it is binding on me. You may have all the best reasons in the world to have it cancelled or annulled but until that is done I am bound by it so that it is useless to tell me your grievances against that surrender. Don't go back, start from 1907 and let us assume that you surrendered up the reserve, the reserve was surrendered to the Dominion Government at the time. Now what happened next, after that?

PRINCE: That is where the trouble began before the surrender was made. The Band split – half did not want to surrender and the other half was for it.

COURT: Now look here Mr. Prince you are going to listen to me or else you will leave the box for somebody else. It is useless to go back further than 1907 [...] it is useless for you to tell me your grievances against the surrender. As far as I am concerned the surrender exists. Unless you show me that there was a retrocession to your Band the surrender is still good as far as I am concerned and I am bound by it and I must enforce it.

PRINCE: Then I have no chance to speak at all then if that is the case.

Q: That is the law anyway.

PRINCE: Then all we have to do is to appeal this to a higher Court. We cannot speak for ourselves here. We have no chance here in the first place.

Q: I am here to administer the law and I must take the law as it is, not perhaps as it should be and not perhaps as you would wish it to be but as it is.

PRINCE: Yes, I understand your meaning.

Q: Now I have tried to assist your friend here [Manninguay] to the best of my ability all the way through the trial. You have no right to complain at all but I may be wrong.

PRINCE: I have a good deal to complain of.³⁴⁰

When asked if Manninguay, along with others specifically named (Sutherland, Pahkoo, Maclean, Robinson, P. Sutherland, Peebles, Cook, J. Sutherland, Greyeyes, H. Pahkoo, A. Sutherland, and J. Peebles), had been at Netley Creek since May, Angus Prince replied:

³⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 20-21.

PRINCE: Yes, and I myself.

Q: And these men were there and they have all been warned?

A: Yes.

Q: And you have been warned?

A: Yes.

Q: And you won't go off?

A: No.

Q: And the other day you repeated that and you defied anybody to put you off, that is correct?

A: yes, that is right.

HUNT: That is the case your worship.

Q [HUNT]: And as a matter of fact they are all trespassing now?

A [PRINCE]: I don't think so, not that I know of.

Q: Your proper Reserve is up at Fisher Landing?

A: No, it is not. It was Mr. Lavender that got us to separate from the Hodgson Band and those people. He actually told us three times you people must separate, go some place, that is the only thing that could be done.³⁴¹

Later on an A. Pahkoo was allowed to take the stand, and pleaded to the Court to do the right thing:

PAHKOO: I don't suppose you have authority to settle this case here.

COURT: The case that is before me now I have authority to settle this case here, jurisdiction and authority to settle it.

PAHKOO: To set it right.

COURT: Wait a minute, that might not be settling your own case, the case that was exposed by Mr. Prince a moment ago. I want you to understand I have not

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. 22-23.

got the power to set aside the surrender that was made in 1907 and more than that I am bound by it. I must assume that it is all correct. [...]

PAHKOO: Well, it is no use of us having it here, we might as well have it in the Exchequer Court.

COURT: Unfortunately you are being brought before me here on a summons. I have listened to the witnesses for the Crown and I find that they have made a case under section 116(a) of the Indian Act and that is all I can do. [...]

PAHKOO: Well then, when did we give the title to the Department of our land?

COURT: I don't know at all, I am sure, I don't know.

PAHKOO: That will be all from me but that is not going to stop. We have been waiting twenty-six years and I guess we can fight another twenty-six years.³⁴²

Manninguay himself was silent throughout most of the hearing, and rarely called upon to speak, despite the presence of a translator. The hearing ended with A. Pahkoo's clear opinion that justice would not be served in that forum, and that the Indians would continue to fight for their rights for "another twenty-six years" if need be. The Court issued a sentence against Manninguay of \$545 in fines, and \$7 in costs, or three months in jail. The fine for returning to land that the Royal Commission of 1911 acknowledged was rightfully theirs was six times the value of what the Indians were supposed to have received under the illegal surrender terms.

Henry Pahkoo was another participant charged with "trespass," who first appeared before Magistrate H.R. Welsford in the Selkirk Police Court on 13 October 1933. Pahkoo had volunteered to fight in "His Majesty's Army" during World War I, and had spent three years on the frontlines in France.³⁴³ Pahkoo's case was the first heard

³⁴² Ibid., p. 24-25.

³⁴³ "The King v. Henry Pahkoo," 20 July to 4 August 1934, PAM, MG4 D5, "Evidence & Proceedings of Prosecutions of Indians for trespass on Old St. Peter's Reserve, 1934," Booklet 1, p. 43.

in a combined docket that included eighteen names. His own legal counsel that day was a Mr. H.M. Hannesson Esq., who addressed the Court as follows in reference to his own client: "I have told these people that it is no use trying the impossible, no use trying to upset or having the whole surrender [of 1907] upset. I told them that they will have to do what is reasonable and proper and possible for them."³⁴⁴ There is some suggestion that Pahkoo may have dismissed Hannesson, precisely for articulating such statements. Whatever the reason, however, Pahkoo's formal hearing and sentencing appears to have been postponed – along with many of the other Saulteaux – until the following summer.

Nine months and "half a dozen different lawyers" later, Pahkoo appeared once again before Magistrate Welsford on 20 July 1934. His new lawyer, one T.C. Greschuk Esq., had only been asked to represent Pahkoo two days before the hearing, and the original lawyer (Mr. McMurray) was unavailable. Greschuk opened with a request for a continuance, admitting:

I am not prepared to go on with these cases today. ... If your worship rules about going on this afternoon I may say that the Indians might as well have no lawyer at all because I know next to nothing about their case and I have not seen any of them except Pahkoo.³⁴⁵

Greschuk's request was denied on the stated grounds that the cases had been pending for "over a year," and the defendants had gone through a half dozen lawyers already. Furthermore, the Crown prosecutor (Theodore Hunt) intimated that Pahkoo had acted like an instigator or ringleader: "We did arrange with a group of eight families to go back [to Peguis] and Pahkoo and some of his friends got at them and persuaded them not to go."

³⁴⁴ "The King v. Henry Pahkoo," 13 October 1933, PAM, MG4 D5, "Evidence & Proceedings of Prosecutions of Indians for trespass on Old St. Peter's Reserve, 1934," Booklet 3, p. 3.

³⁴⁵ "The King v. Henry Pahkoo," 20 July 1934, p. 1-2.

Not only that, Hunt charged, but “Pahkoo came in the other day and practically took possession of the Indian Office here on the main thoroughfare and said that these lands were his and that he was going to do what he liked.” The presiding judge concurred. In denying the continuance Magistrate Welsford stated:

Offers have been made to them and they refuse to accept them. Now, the only thing to do is to go right ahead. They have to be taught that they cannot disobey the law. ... especially now, as Mr. Hunt says, this man Pahkoo is beginning to act in a hostile way which will not be tolerated for one minute. One cannot give him much consideration and I do not see why he is entitled to any.³⁴⁶

A reading of the fifty-page transcript of Henry Pahkoo’s trial makes it quite clear that the Court judge – as promised – did not “give him much consideration.” More than this, Magistrate Welsford willfully distorted the facts about the 1911 Royal Commission to suit his own purposes. Pahkoo was repeatedly addressed in the most patronizing manner, and throughout the hearing, it was clear that both the Crown prosecutor and Magistrate Welsford both considered the “surrender agreement” text of 1907 to be sufficient evidence that the Indians had ceded all their rights to St. Peter’s.

When questioned by his own lawyer, Pahkoo testified that he was old enough to remember the 1907 surrender, and despite being of requisite age (and married) at the time, he did not receive the promised allotment of patented land. Pahkoo stated: “I was supposed to own land but I do not know just where ... it was always promised.” Pahkoo stated that he remained at St. Peter’s for about seven years after the “surrender,” before moving to the new reserve. Apart from three years in the army during World War I, he testified that he had lived “about maybe sixteen years” at Peguis.³⁴⁷ Under cross-

³⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 3-4.

³⁴⁷ “King v. Henry Pahkoo,” 4 August 1934, p. 42-43.

examination by Hunt, Pahkoo was asked about the removal orders telling him and other Saulteaux to return to Peguis:

- Q And you were asked to go back to your own Reserve?
 A Yes, sir.
 Q And you told them you would not go?
 A Yes, sir.
 Q And you have been there ever since?
 A Yes, sir.
 Q And you knew at the time that you were trespassing?
 A Well, I am not trespassing because the ground is mine.
 Q It is yours?
 A Yes.
 Q Was this marsh part of the land surrendered in 1907?
 A That was never surrendered.
 Q What is it used for?
 A It is set aside for me and the rest of the Indians.
 Q In what respect?
 A To make our living on.³⁴⁸

Later on Hunt returned to the question of the 1907 surrender (which he referred to as a “treaty”):

- Q And these lands were surrendered under the treaty of 1907?
 A They have never been surrendered not by us.
 Q Who were the parties to that agreement, you belong to the Saulteaux?
 A That was only the Chief and Council has done this, not the Band.
 Q The Band then did not approve of it, is that what you contend?
 A Yes, sir.³⁴⁹

Addressing “charges” that Pahkoo had improperly cut hay, Hunt inquired:

- Q Have you ever had any permit to cut hay on this land?
 A No, we don’t need any.
 THE COURT: Answer the question – have you a permit?
 A No.
 Q Never had a permit?
 A No.
 Q And you have cut some hay?
 A Yes, I did cut hay and will cut more to [sic].³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 46.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 47.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 49.

Pahkoo's defiant stance, and his continual insistence that the 1907 surrender was not consented to by the majority of the St. Peter's Band – and was therefore invalid – were too much for Magistrate Welsford:

THE COURT: Pahkoo stand up. Last year some of your Band came before me on a similar charge and I found at that time, I ruled at that time, that this Surrender was valid, a valid surrender of this land. That was my finding then and is my finding today. These lands were surrendered by the majority of the Indians on Saint Peters Reserve in 1907. That is in evidence and I remember last year when this came before me that the matter of a commission was brought up which showed that a committee had been appointed to enquire into the validity of that surrender headed by Chief Justice Howell and he found that the Surrender was a valid Surrender. Now that appears to me to be a perfectly valid Surrender from the facts that appear before me, and you and the rest of your Band who are now on the St. Peters Reserve have absolutely no rights there. You are trespassers on that land today; you were warned to get off; you knew if you did not get off you are subject to penalties; you know that because I have had to impose the penalties on other members of the Band that have appeared before me and I will have to find you guilty of the charge against you.

THE ACCUSED: For what reason?

THE COURT: Well, I have told you, because your Band surrendered that land and you have no rights there.

THE ACCUSED: No, sir.

THE COURT: Well, it is no use arguing. Don't argue with me as I am the one to decide this now and that is what I have decided that this is a valid surrender and you and your band have no rights today on St. Peters Reserve unless you may possibly have some right to cut hay if you own land in the St. Peters Reserve. Now you do not own land in the Reserve today; there is no evidence at all that you own it. Now you have been required to remove from these lands away back in June 1933 and you have failed to comply with this notice, the notice that was served upon you. Now the penalty as you know is that if you fail to comply and you are found guilty, you are liable to a penalty of \$5, not less than \$5 and not more than \$10, for every day during the time you fail to comply with that notice to get off, that is for every day you have stayed on that Reserve after the notice was served upon you to get off and in default of payment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months.

MR HUNT: We have it figured out, it now amounts to \$2,015.00, the Act says not less than \$5 per day.

THE COURT: I have to comply with the Act and that is the fine I shall have to impose, \$2,015.00 or three months in gaol.

THE ACCUSED: You won't keep me in gaol very long.³⁵¹

The court transcript is significant for several reasons. First, it reveals in more than one place that Magistrate Welsford had some familiarity with both the Howell Commission of 1906-07 and the Royal Commission of 1911. Earlier in Pahkoo's hearing, Welsford had acknowledged that "[t]here have been *two* [Royal Commissions] as a matter of fact, and one found one way and one the other."³⁵² What is remarkable about his summation, however, is that the magistrate appears to have deliberately misled the Court, by suggesting that Chief Justice Howell had presided over the commission to investigate the validity of the 1907 surrender – and more than this, found it to be valid. In reality, Howell had presided over an earlier commission to investigate "competing claims" to river lots within the St. Peter's Parish. Howell had *recommended* surrender before the first formal hearings of his commission had even begun, and he worked diligently to achieve it. The second Royal Commission (1911) was led by others, but called upon Howell as a witness, and concluded that the surrender was illegal and therefore invalid. Magistrate Welsford almost certainly lied to facilitate a conviction and remove a batch of "recalcitrant" – and in his own words "hostile" – Indians from lands now occupied by white settlers.

The transcript also tells us something about the "sweet promises" of the British Crown and Canadian colonizers. At Treaty 1, the Queen's representatives promised to deal with settler encroachment against Indian lands "as She shall deem just," in order to

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. 50-52.

³⁵² "King v. Henry Pahkoo," 27 July 1934, p. 28.

ensure that Indian reserve lands would be protected in perpetuity. Almost sixty years later, the Confederation Jubilee report from Indian Affairs referred to the “traditional loyalty of the Indians to the British Crown,” proudly noted the sacrifices of First Nations in “the Great War,” and insisted that “Indians have reason to be grateful to the Canadian Government for the benefits and consideration that they have received.” The theft of the St. Peter’s reserve, and the lies told to convict Henry Pahkoo, one of 4,000 indigenous people who fought “for the Empire” in World War I, tell us something of the nature of settler-colonialism in Canada, and the “benefits and consideration” afforded the original people of this land.

CONCLUSION

A proposed deal announced on 23 May 2008 offered the Peguis First Nation \$126 million as compensation for the St. Peter's removal. The offer is subject to Band ratification, and has been touted as the largest single and specific (as opposed to comprehensive) land claim settlement in Canadian history. It is the latest development in a century-old struggle, and a decade-long legal negotiation, arising from the St. Peter's (now Peguis) people's forced relocation from their original land between 1907 and 1934. Peguis Band advisor Lloyd Stevenson stated that the settlement is compensation for "the illegal surrender of our reserve at St. Peter's in 1907." He went on to describe the subsequent forced relocation of his people as "our Trail of Tears," in reference to the better-known "removal" of the Cherokee Nation from their original homeland in the 1830s.³⁵³ Referring to the settlement offer, Peguis Chief Glenn Hudson was elated: "It's a long time coming for our people." He went on to state that "I think we've arrived at a very fair amount in terms of the assessment," and noted that an earlier, smaller offer had been rejected.³⁵⁴

Not all Peguis residents are convinced. Former Chief Louis Stevenson – whose 27-year reign as Chief ended in 2007 when he lost to Hudson – has suggested that the offer is not high enough. (Stevenson is perhaps best known for embarrassing the Canadian government in 1987 by inviting the South African ambassador to Peguis Reserve, in an effort to highlight the parallels between South African apartheid and Canada's treatment of indigenous peoples.)

³⁵³ Cited in *Winnipeg Free Press*, 23 May 2008, p. A3.

³⁵⁴ Cited in *Winnipeg Free Press*, 24 May 2008, p. A4.

Beyond its monetary value, the settlement offer has been a small but symbolic victory for the people of Peguis First Nation. Mainstream media coverage has finally acknowledged what they have known for a hundred years: the 1907 “surrender agreement” was, in the words of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, “an historic land fraud.” In addition to recognizing the 1907 “surrender” as a swindle, the corporate media has also acknowledged that it was “illegal” (even by the low standards of the perpetrators) and that it entailed the “forced relocation” of the indigenous inhabitants to more remote, and lower quality lands. These are public acknowledgements of wrong-doing that could mean a great deal to the descendants of the St. Peter’s people.

However, one cannot begin to discuss a meaningful settlement offer, reparations, or other forms of justice (such as the right of the people to *return* to their homeland, if they so choose), without an accurate picture of nature and scope of the “removal” tragedy, the human consequences of ethnic cleansing. Writing about forced removal in a decidedly different context, Colin Bundy nevertheless captures something universal about assessing its human cost:

[T]he details of broken promises, shattered communities, desolate camps and shallow graves; and how these translate into trauma, frustration, grief, dull dragging apathy and surrender of the will to live. Equally important, we learn from them something of the ingenuity and determination and courage that have enabled women and men to survive, to resist, and above all to envisage a different future.³⁵⁵

The St. Peter’s removal, like all such instances of forcible relocation, was a crime against humanity. As Perdue and Green have noted in their study of the Cherokee “Trail of Tears,” the number of people killed is not the only measure of tragedy. Expelling a

³⁵⁵ Colin Bundy, “Land, Law and Power: Forced Removals in Historical Context,” in Christina Murray & Catherine O’Regan (eds.). *No Place to Rest: Forced Removals and the Law in South Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 10-11.

people from their homeland is, in and of itself, a crushing fate. As Sarah Watie, a Cherokee woman, wrote in 1846 after her own people's "removal:" "I am so tired of living this way. I don't believe I could live one year longer ... it has wore my spirits out just the thoughts of not having a good home ... I am perfectly sick of the world."³⁵⁶

Murdo Sutherland, an 80-year old Saulteaux man from St. Peter's, told the Selkirk district Police Court in 1934 (when he was being charged for "trespass" on his own land): "I am not going. I want to die where I was born. I am pretty near dying of starvation."³⁵⁷

Neither the St. Peter's removal nor settler-colonialism have managed to destroy the people of Peguis. They have not given up their struggle for recognition of wrongdoing, reparations, nor even land reclamation itself. It is hoped that by unearthing, re-telling, and owning up to this shameful history of land theft, shattered communities, and de-development – core elements of any instance of ethnic cleansing – this study might contribute to an understanding of what meaningful reparations and justice ought to entail.

³⁵⁶ Perdue and Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*, p. 141.

³⁵⁷ "King v. Murdo Sutherland," 4 August 1934, PAM, MG4 D5, "Evidence & Proceedings of Prosecutions of Indians for trespass on Old St. Peter's Reserve, 1934," Booklet 1, p. 77.

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