

**Wild West Canada:  
Buffalo Bill and Transborder History**

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## Abstract

Canadians continue to struggle with their western identity. For one reason or another, they have separated themselves from an Americanized “blood and thunder” history. But making this separation was not always as easy as it might seem today.

This thesis contributes to the growing body of scholarship that is problematizing the western borderlands. It does this primarily by looking at historical representations of the West in late nineteenth and early twentieth century movies, plays, books, and especially by examining the wildly popular traveling show *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*. It was largely Buffalo Bill’s show that popularized the Western as a genre of spectacle, and to a degree that earlier historians have overlooked, it did this on both sides of the border. Indeed, the show highlighted “Western” heroic qualities and placed them in a space called “the West” that refused to be divided by the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Buffalo Bill’s show expressed and promoted western sensibilities that were inclusive of Canada, and that many Canadians embraced. In the show Canadians were neither exotic others nor were they European-style eastern dandies. Rather they were participants in a westering narrative that cared little for what the eastern elite or academics might have thought of as distinguishing national characteristics.

In this thesis I primarily examine Buffalo Bill’s personal history and the cultural messaging associated with his Wild West Show to illustrate previously overlooked aspects of the history of the way Canadians and Americans have, since the inception of the two countries, and for many years previously, impacted each other from across the border. We already know, for instance, that criminals and political enemies have sought asylum across the world’s longest unprotected border; that fortune hunters have crossed and re-crossed the border looking for one big strike; and that simple farmers, traders, hunters, and business people crossed in the hopes for greater returns and a settled life for themselves and their families. But whereas these kinds of crossings happened in the East as well, they had greater significance along the vast western borderlands, where a man or woman could cross the border without being aware of it. In this thesis, I argue that ideas, evidenced though newspapers, also crossed this western border – often without eastern people being fully conscious of it.

But of course, if some people and ideas crossed the border unaware, others invested the boundary with great significance. Such crossing sometimes had more profound impacts on Canadian and American understandings of what was meant by “the west” than we’ve fully appreciated in the past. By examining the previously overlooked history of Buffalo Bill’s personal connection to Canada and the messaging about the Canadian Wild West depicted through his Wild West Shows this thesis seeks to contribute a history that was much more complicated and mixed on both sides of the Canada / US border than previously appreciated.

## **Acknowledgements**

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Gary Zellar for accepting me to the program, and thanks to Keith Carlson for helping me out. Nadine Penner for helping all the time. Thank you to Margret Kennedy and Martha Smith-Norris for helping me to think about who I was writing for and how to think academically. Thank you to my committee and William Bartley for his time and thoughts.

This Thesis was not easy to produce and I had many repeating and continuing issues over the course of my time. It was through the support of my family and friends that kept me moving forward. Finally it was Keith Carlson's acceptance of me with thesis in hand that finally helped my reach the final step.

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*Life is too short to make big letters when small ones will do; and as for punctuation, if my readers don't know enough to take their breath without those little marks, they'll have to lose it, that's all.*

*-William "Buffalo Bill" Cody*

## Introduction

### “My Debut Upon the World Stage...”

...the hero of this sketch... is a plain unassuming man of medium height, possessed of an iron constitution wedded to indomitable courage and physical activity. His mental qualities prove him to be a man of superior character and a leader among men. His boyhood was passed among the Indians, from whom he gained a knowledge of woodcraft that served him well during the late Rebellion. ...he proved his skill as a soldier... against the attack of 1,600 volunteers, and bears on his person numerous scars made by his enemies' bullets on that occasion. Whatever the merits of the question may be, [he] has shown that he was willing to sacrifice everything to secure justice for a people he believed had been wronged.... The time will come when the future historian will point to him as a man 'sans peur et sans reproche:' as the last man to lay down his arms in what he felt to be a righteous cause; as a man having the courage of his convictions, and the daring to assert them.<sup>1</sup>

Who is our hero? A man from “the west” no doubt; but where is that? Legend promoted in dime novels and later by Hollywood tells us that if his life was full of hardship and fighting, we should be able to assume that he comes from the American West. Clearly the American West exists as a narrative construct that has a predictable cast of characters, one of which is described above. The idea of the “west” and its subsequent promulgation in many ways comes from *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*. William Frederick Cody created an outdoor western spectacle, titled *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, in 1885. His show toured, in one form or another, until 1914. The often imitated *Wild West* was the first of many western shows; Cody brought scenes of the west out of cramped play houses and hosted them under an open sky, giving his western scenes the space to breathe that more closely captured the expanse of the west. He also opted to hire real Native Americans over the white ‘supers’ who had represented Native peoples in theater at the time. Cody was instrumental in the conversion of western themes from adult fair to

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<sup>1</sup> 1886 Program, MS 6, Box 1, Folder 5, Cody Collection, McCracken Research Library (MRL), Buffalo Bill Centre of the West, Cody, Wyoming.

entertainment that the whole family could, and did, enjoy. But what is less known is that Cody's quintessentially American wild west was also a Canadian space. The hero in the narrative above was Gabriel Dumont, military commander of the Metis under Louis Riel, and a frontline performer in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

Cody's show was so instrumental in creating a popular conception of the west that permeated the collective consciousness of the most of world that he has come to be considered by western historians as the first international celebrity. In fact it was Cody, his show, and his contemporaries that provided much of the material for all the historical research and analysis done concerning the west, and if Cody himself was not directly involved his ideas or echoes of him are evident.

The first group of scholarship to seriously examine the role and impact of cultural phenomena like the Wild West show were the American Exceptionalist theorists. This approach to understanding the American past can be traced directly to Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893.<sup>2</sup> Turner's "Frontier Thesis" argued that the American experience of frontier conquest created a unique and exceptional American people. In a historical coincidence Turner debuted his thesis in Chicago just blocks away from where Cody had set up his touring stand. Cody's show, in fact, had often made use of the western progressive themes that Turner highlighted in his thesis. Another contemporary of Cody's who contributed to the American Exceptionalist field was President, and man of the west, Theodore Roosevelt. First in his multi-volume work, *The Winning of the West*,<sup>3</sup> and then in his seminal philosophical essay, "The Strenuous Life,"

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<sup>2</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," <http://sundog.usask.ca/search~S8?/X+jackson+turner&searchscope=8&SORT=D/X+jackson+turner&searchscope=8&SORT=D&SUBKEY=+jackson+turner/1%2C153%2C153%2CB/frameset&FF=X+jackson+turner&searchscope=8&SORT=D&7%2C7%2C> (accessed November 17, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* (New York: G.P. Putman and Sons: The Knickerbocker Press, 1894).

Roosevelt wrote of the restorative nature of the west and how it could heal the soul, and make men.<sup>4</sup> Roosevelt also discussed his time in the west and the characters that he interacted with, his work expounded the exceptional nature of the American west and its people. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Ray Allen Billington was the staunchest supporter and defender of Turner's Frontier Thesis.<sup>5</sup> These frontier scholars mixed a heavy dose of American politics into their scholarship, and in that way crafted an explanatory model for "westerling" that was increasingly linked to the American political nation – as opposed to a trans-national westerning process or phenomenon. As such, these men created the interpretation that the American west was a special place unique to the United States and that the interactions on the western plain made Americans the people they were.

This frontier school of thought served as something that Canadian academics could react against, thereby giving rise to the revisionist theory that Canada had a good and peaceful western expansion and the United States had a "blood and thunder" expansion reflected in their popular culture.<sup>6</sup> This is not to imply that these voices were hegemonic – the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century also saw historical additions made by Walter Sage who argued that the close relationship between Canada and the United States created an 'interlacing' of the two countries' frontiers giving them a shared history and more importantly a shared western history.<sup>7</sup> Sage, for the most part, though, was ignored as a new school of thought was gaining ground in western history.

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<sup>4</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life* (New York: The Century co., 1901).

<sup>5</sup> Ray Allen Billington, *Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Teacher Scholar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> Harold Adams Innis, *The Fur Trade In Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), Donald Creighton, *The Empire of the St. Lawrence* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1956), James Careless, "Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 35 No 1 (March 1964).

<sup>7</sup> Walter Sage, *Canada Sea to Sea* (Toronto, University of Toronto History Pamphlet Series, 1940).

In the 1980's and 1990's a new western history emerged in response to the social history movement of the 1970's. This new western history was largely led by Patricia Limerick,<sup>8</sup> and Richard White<sup>9</sup> on the American side of the border and Sarah Carter<sup>10</sup> in Canada. They added research and interpretations based on race and gender and supported a more well rounded approach to western history. This new western history also opened a conversation suggesting that Canadian and American western histories were not all that different; they were both destructive in many ways.<sup>11</sup>

Working alongside, but not necessarily in concert with, the new western historians were a group of scholars known as the 'myth and symbol school.' Led by William Goetzmann, Brian Dippie, and Elliot West, the myth and symbol camp argues that the importance of the west is in many ways wrapped up in our understanding of it rather than in historical facts and reality. It is, created and maintained in popular culture and collective memory.<sup>12</sup> For these scholars, gunfighters, running battles on horseback, and the school teacher themes became as important to the history of the west as the actual history of the west.

Sometimes stigmatized as a regional history, but often aspiring to present a national interpretive narrative, Western history enjoys a varied and rich historiography - in many cases full of conflicting opinions, much like the actual west. While all of this history is very important to understanding the story of the west and the creation of the history of the west, our focus will

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<sup>8</sup> Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conflict* (New York: W.W. Norton & company, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of my Own": A History of the American West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Toronto: McGill University Press, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Thacker, ed., *One West Two Myths Vol. 1* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004). Robert Thacker and C.L. Higham, eds., *One West Two Myths Vol. 2* (Calgary University of Calgary Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Brian Dippie, *Custer's Last Stand: The Anatomy of an American Myth* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1994). William H. Goetzmann and William N. Goetzmann, *The West of Imagination* (New York: W. W. Norton Incorporated, 1988). Elliot West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the rush to Colorado* (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 1998).

be on the history of the people, the common people, the consumers of western history and spectacle at the dawn of western history, and the foundations of western entertainment. But where is one to start? For decades it was a commonplace assumption, promoted by government and popular media alike, that Canada and the United States had greatly divergent histories; understandings of each nation's western expansion was a key signifier of this difference. Canada, according to the popular perception had a peaceful expansion westward, whereas American western history was violent. More recently many scholars have recognized the two countries many underplayed similarities. These similarities are often framed through the lens of social and cultural histories. But what all of these studies overlook is the degree to which many Canadians and Americans once shared a common understanding of their western history – a frontiering history. This study joins the two western histories by examining the development and deployment of a popular myth, rich in symbol, to reveal that classic Turnerian frontier narrative – often thought to be solely the domain of the United States – though perhaps never a historic reality was indeed a perceived reality, and one that was shared by Canadians and Americans. This study utilizes Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, the most famous western dramatic and historical theatrical show to reveal new historiographical avenues that join Canadian and American histories. In doing this, this study contributes to a growing body of borderland history that has been preoccupied with social historical subjects to reveal the significance of popular ideas as products of borderlands.

Our approach will focus on William Frederick Cody or "Buffalo Bill," the preeminent creator of western tropes. Cody's shadow runs long in the historiography cited above, and stands as a testament to his importance to western history and the creation of the common perception of the west. Where Cody's fingerprints are not always evident is in the history of Canadian thought

about the west (and to a less degree, American thought about Canada). It will be one goal of this thesis to bring Cody's Canadian connections and messages to the forefront, and to use Cody's history to reinforce this objective. After all, Cody used and created many of the exceptionalist ideas and images of the time; he also created much of the imagery studied by the myth and symbol school; and finally as we shall see, Cody's show supported Sage's ideas as well as the new western historians concerning a shared western history.<sup>13</sup> Cody's unique history and involvement in the creation of popular perceptions of the west make him the perfect person to study when concerned with the viewing people and the creation of western history in a broad transborder study. Cody was a western hero and his show created many heroes for audiences to marvel at.

The vignette that prefaces this chapter is illustrative of these historiographical processes. Gabriel Dumont, Canadian born and bred, appeared in the 1886 program for *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* and was printed repeatedly over the course of the year that Dumont toured with Cody and *Wild West*. The language and themes of the write-up do, however, blur the lines between the Canadian and American west, and it is the history of this blurring that forms the central focus of this thesis. Cody was not necessarily promoting an idea of an expanded shared frontier west that was widely embraced by others, but, as one of North America's first celebrities, he had the ability to influence opinion, and as will be demonstrated, certain previously overlooked aspects of Cody's life history reinforced his interpretation of an American-style west that included Canadian geography and history.

This thesis includes three chapters. Chapter one provides the historical background of the transborder west, proving that such a study is very important to understanding the international

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<sup>13</sup> Sage, *Canada Sea To Sea*

politics between Canada and the United States. The first chapter also explains how Cody's celebrity and the popularity of his show was uniquely placed to make use of many famous characters. As well, the crossover between real life events and Cody's employment of actors reinforces their importance not only in history and transborder relations, but also their placement in a shared western history.

Chapter two focuses on Cody's connections to Canada, both through his family and through the show itself. Specialized Canadian advertisements are examined, with attention paid to the Canadian imagery within them. This chapter also considers the reactions that Canadian spectators had while the show toured Canada.

Chapter three looks at the active Canadian participants in Cody's program, where they came from, and how they were used in the show. In addition, this chapter analyses the response that the Canadian performers elicited while on tour.

All told, the thesis aims to understand the dynamics between the two countries and to explain the differences that came about. Cody is an enlightening case study of the two wests as he is credited with the creation of much of the American West that we are familiar with. However, in an interesting turn, Cody's show actually is far more inclusive and does more to join the two histories than to push them apart.

## **Chapter One**

### **“Kissing [Mother] and My Sisters a Fond Farewell, I Started Off On My first Trip Across the Plains...”**

This chapter discusses key historical events and people on the north side of the medicine line for what they can reveal and reflect about a shared Canadian and American western history. The creation of the North West Mounted Police was a response to alcohol traders on the northern plains, fears of Aboriginal conflicts with white settlers, and fears of American expansion. Likewise, the ways in which Canadian and Americans responded to threats of violence and political dissent (at Red River and then Cypress Hills and Batoche) reveals a shared history of western violence with distinct American and Canadian expressions. This chapter also examines the lives of several key historical actors, “heroes” or “villains” depending on one’s perspective, whose stories are products of shared experiences across a permeable border that obscured similarities and highlighted differences. Buffalo Bill drew these stories into his Wild West show thereby creating both a narrative and a series of symbols of a shared western historical experience that was inclusive of, and not bothered by, the subtle differences between the way Canadians and Americans responded to historical events along the borderlands. This chapter draws heavily on the intellectual legacy of scholars like Seymour Lipset and revives some of the older and often ignored Canadian historiography – most notably interpretations associated with Walter Sage and his distinctly western Canadian response to critiques of Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis.

## Alcohol, Arms, and Actors – Shades of Gray on the Western Borderlands

History that is taught in modern high schools and universities tends to use the “modern nation state” as its unit of analysis. This approach, among other factors, has led to the erroneous conclusion that Canada and the United States developed more independently from one another than was actually the case.<sup>14</sup> From the very moment the political geographies on the continent differentiated between American and British/French identities in 1776, their histories remained linked. In analyses of the national character of both countries those contrasts are often brought to the forefront. Yet, not only did the two countries continue to affect each other through domestic and international affairs, they also created strong connections and sometimes aimed to break those in their western expansion as well as in the folk stories and legends that spun out of their new frontiers.

In order to understand the difference between Canada and the United States, one must understand their respective histories, as history is crucial to the creation of western identity and culture. The creation of these two nations marks the first instance of difference that has trickled down over the years. Despite the efforts of the “new western historians” of the 1990’s, the American public still continues to hold in its popular imagination a grand sense of Manifest Destiny that underlies and informs what is referred to as “American Exceptionalism.”<sup>15</sup> This American sense of exceptionalism found expression, in part, in the creation of mythic heroes who conquered an ever retreating series of western frontiers.

Some of this sense of exceptionalism comes from the fact that Americans found it necessary to make up for lost time. As political sociologist Seymour Lipset has shown, in their

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<sup>14</sup> Evidenced through the continuing popular appeal of the “Frontier Thesis” within American society, and the associated concept of “American Exceptionalism.”

<sup>15</sup> Manifest Destiny refers to an idea that Americans were and are destined for greatness.

minds, Americans had no continental history save for that of the Aboriginal people that they chose to disregard, so they needed a bright future to strive for.<sup>16</sup> Both Abraham Lincoln and Ralph Waldo Emerson make this evident through their belief that America was founded not on a national history but on a national ideology.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly enough, some of this belief and hope for a bright future likely came out of the tension created by the Civil War and Reconstruction, as the country being ripped in half highlighted the idea of the west as a shining place that newly unified Americans could conquer together.

Canadian historians, like Jim Miller, have likewise shown that Canada chose to ignore the Aboriginal people.<sup>18</sup> Canada was able to link its national history with that of Great Britain. Unlike the United States, Canadians did not form a republic through revolution, yet they still had problems conceptualizing their new nation. William Lyon Mackenzie King, Canada's 10<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister, who served over five non-concurrent Parliaments between 1921 and 1948, once said, "If some countries have too much history, [Canada] has too much geography."<sup>19</sup> This perspective shines a light on the problem that many Canadians perceived. Canada includes many diverse regions, and there was no overarching narrative to breed cohesion and no heroic history to bind the nation. Canada was, one could say, an unnaturally constructed place with people under the same flag spread 9,000 kilometers apart.

Over the years, Canadians have also shown a tendency to frame their identity within the fact that they are not American.<sup>20</sup> Canadians did not join in the Revolutionary War, they resisted

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<sup>16</sup> Seymour Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 19. The ideological conversion to becoming "American" calls for the abandonment of old cultural markers to full incorporate into American society, this is evidenced by the American melting pot idea.

<sup>17</sup> Lipset, *Continental Divide*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Evidenced in JR Miller's, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Lipset, *Continental Divide*, 56.

<sup>20</sup> Lipset, *Continental Divide*, 53.

an American invasion during the War of 1812, they joined the First World War as part of the British Empire, then as a distinct nation became a combatant ally of Britain's in the second World War long before America joined the fracas, and, of course, Canada refused to fight in Vietnam and in the Iraq Wars. As Lipset wrote, "Canadians are the world's oldest and most continuing un-Americans."<sup>21</sup> However, in highlighting the differences Lipset and others diminished the reality that Canada and the United States also share important historical connections and developments.

Lipset describes how American writers and journalists fostered an idealized Western image of the lone gun fighter, an individual who takes the law into his own hands, distinguished from all others by the clothes on his back, the content of his heart, as well as his skill and speed with his weapon of choice, the six-gun. Compared to the Canadian Mountie, who is not only the most identifiable symbol of Canadian Western identity, and often *the* symbol of Canada, the contrasts are drastic. The Mountie is the ultimate representation of social justice, a concept that has been agreed upon internationally as the ideal of Canadian Western identity. The Mountie is "impersonal, all encompassing, and pre-eminently social."<sup>22</sup> The understanding of the 'standard' character of American Western identity is seen as different due to the founding principles of the two countries. Americans, Lipset argues, espouse the ideal of 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' while Canadians continue to use the old vestige of colonial history under the United Kingdom, with the phrase 'peace, order, and good government.' These ideals have created the stylized and the commonly understood concept of the west through national historical identities.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Lipset, *Continental Divide*, 53.

<sup>22</sup> Lipset, *Continental Divide*, 90.

<sup>23</sup> These idealized goals of government can be found in the respective founding documentation for each country.

## Alcohol

One of the main issues linking both Canadian and American national identities was their relationship with alcohol. In his book *Whoop-up Country: The Canadian-American West, 1865-1885*, Paul Sharp chronicles the trans-border trade of alcohol and the tensions created by the Whoop-up trail and camp Whoop-up, located in Alberta. Alcohol was seen as a prime reason for social decay amongst Aboriginals on the western plains, and much of the alcohol sold and imported by American whiskey traders was mixed with anything that would increase the volume of a batch, such as lantern oil. This volatile mixture would often lead to violent outbursts, illness and even death. At one point, alcohol was such a problem for the Native peoples in Canada that in 1874 the Royal Canadian Mounted Police suggested that if alcohol was continually funnelled to the Native population from the United States, the population would decline and disappear within two years.<sup>24</sup> By 1850, American forts were more interested in protecting settlers heading west or north to the Manitoba gold fields, and stopping the whiskey trade in the United States was low on the list of priorities. From time to time, when the American military would try and quell the whiskey trade the traffickers would head north across the border where the laws were seldom enforced.<sup>25</sup>

Along with social issues created by the American whiskey traders, there was the tendency for trade forts to fly homemade American flags, often well within Canadian jurisdiction.<sup>26</sup> While in hindsight this might not seem like the greatest of insults, at the time the idea of ownership came into question as to when and where Americans might wish to populate and colonize

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<sup>24</sup> Paul F. Sharp, *Whoop-up Country: The Canadian-American West, 1865-1885* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 51.

<sup>25</sup> Tony Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 264.

<sup>26</sup> Marian C. McKenna, *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 86.

western lands. American whiskey traders raising the 'Stars and Stripes' everyday over Canadian soil could mark the start of an American takeover, and this kind of behaviour did not put Canadians in the east at ease. Through the sale of alcohol and the response to it, Canada and the United States were simultaneously joined, but the two countries were also in opposition. Though American whiskey traders conducted their trade in Canada with impunity, they were not the only Americans travelling north of the border. A group of wolf hunters created an international incident that forced the Canadian government to take steps to ensure Canadian lands and itspeople remained unmolested and Canadian.

### Arms

In 1873, a group of 'American' wolf hunters stopped to sleep about a day's ride from their base of operations in Montana at Fort Benton. As they slept, approximately twenty of their horses were taken, possibly by young Native men, as the hunters offered no resistance. The next morning, the hunters deduced that the horses were driven north, and they pushed onto Fort Benton with their wagons packed with wolf hides. After delivering the skins, a group of men returned to the tracks and headed north into Canada to track down the stolen horses. Eventually, the hunters lost the tracks and headed into the Cypress Hills, in modern day Saskatchewan, to ask a local trader if he had heard anything about the missing horses.

As Tony Reece has show in his study *Arc of the Medicine Line*, when the hunters reached the fort, the party noticed Little Soldier and his band of Assiniboine and immediately suspected the Assiniboine as the group that had stolen their horses. Little Soldier and his band would have been nowhere near the fort had the low numbers of bison not driven them into the protection of the Cypress Hills. The trader also assured the hunters that the Assiniboine were not the group

that had made off with the missing horses and that no one in the area had any knowledge of the theft. After drinking at the trading house for a time, a local showed up to accuse the same Assiniboine of stealing his lone horse, but Little Soldier denied the accusation and suggested that the horse might have just wandered off. A combination of hurt feelings, misplaced anger, wounded pride, and alcohol, probably of low quality, exploded into gunfire.

When the dust settled, one wolf hunter was dead, shot through the chest. The Assiniboine suffered many more losses ranging from thirteen to two hundred, though the official Canadian government count stood at forty.<sup>27</sup> Fearing reprisals from the large Assiniboine camp, the wolvers quickly sobered up, buried their dead companion under the floor of the trading camp and burned it to the ground, reasoning that the Assiniboine would not be able to mutilate the body.<sup>28</sup> The wolvers then headed west to Fort Whoop-up.

After reaching Whoop-up, in modern day Alberta just east of the future Fort Macleod, the wolvers were disappointed due to the lack of news of the missing horses, though they did hear of a nearby Peigan village. Feeling confident over the incident in Saskatchewan, the wolvers aimed to confront the Peigan and search for their stock. However, the wolvers soon realized that they would not dictate the meeting with the Peigan as they grossly underestimated the size of the village, and the Peigan were not starving and weak as the Assiniboine had been in the Cypress Hills. Fortunately for the hunters, the Peigan were in good temper and gladly escorted the wolvers through the camp to view the village's horses, where no evidence of the hunters' horses was found. The wolvers returned to Montana without a piece of evidence as to the true location of the missing horses and it is still unknown what happened to them.

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<sup>27</sup> Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line*, 115.

<sup>28</sup> Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line*, 115.

The first account of the murders was recorded in a Montana newspaper on June 11<sup>th</sup> 1873, where the wolvers were portrayed in a positive light.<sup>29</sup> However, as the story spread north and east and the Canadian papers got hold of the story, the character of the wolvers changed dramatically. The hunters were called ‘American gangsters’ and ‘American scum’ by the media even though many of the hunters were in fact Canadian.<sup>30</sup> The difference in the recording of the incident served different purposes on either side of the 49<sup>th</sup>. In the United States, the hunters dispensed judgement, no more and no less, and the actions taken by the white hunters were perceived as a response to Native aggression. However, in Canada the incident was seen much differently, as the massacre put a spotlight on the whiskey trade in the west and the dangers to the Native peoples in the area. Not only had the Natives been killed, but the country had been invaded by a foreign force trespassing illegally on Canadian soil. The Cypress Hills Massacre created a legal dilemma as to what would be done with international criminals that would colour the relations between the two countries for years.

Prime Minister John A. Macdonald had been trying to pass legislation to form a regulatory agency to protect Canadian interests in the lands they had received from the Hudson Bay Company. Fortunately, the tensions created by the Cypress Hills Massacre and the whiskey trade gave Macdonald the ability to push through the creation of the North West Mounted Police in order to control the western territory and to stop the lawless activities that had taken place there. Some North West Mounted Police were dispatched south of the line to begin the extradition process.<sup>31</sup> While the United States was reluctant to hand over some of the wolvers, it eventually relented and sent seven men to Helena for extradition hearings.<sup>32</sup> Some men were

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<sup>29</sup> Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line*, 116.

<sup>30</sup> Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line*, 116. Sharp, *Whoop-up Country*, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line*, 354.

<sup>32</sup> Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line*, 354.

also arrested in Canada, and while the courts were able to make arrests, they were unable to secure any convictions and the men were able to walk away freely. Even though there were no convictions, the arrests and criminal proceedings were enough for the Canadian public to feel that ‘peace, order, and good government’ was restored to the Canadian prairie and the story simply faded away. In addition, the people in the east also had the peace of mind that the North West Mounted Police were watching out for the well-being of the Native peoples as well as patrolling the border.

While the Canadians gained peace of mind, some Americans had an uneasy feeling over the presence of the new Mounties.<sup>33</sup> Originally, the North West Mounted Police were called the North West Mounted Rifles. The British had sometimes not so subtly supported the Confederacy during the Civil War, and the Americans worried that the Rifles might be used militarily against American settlers. Macdonald, however, quickly put the Americans’ minds at ease by changing the name from the “Rifles” to the “Police.”<sup>34</sup> This simple name change was an easy compromise for Macdonald, and he dispatched the Mounties while still allowing the Americans to feel confident that Canada would not make a claim to lands south of the medicine line.

Ultimately, Canada launched its most iconic western emblem, the RCMP, as a reaction to American cutthroats and criminals threatening the safety of its Native peoples (and the sovereignty of Dominion lands). However, Canadians changed the name in reaction to American anxiety over a possible conquest. This case exemplifies instances ways in which the two countries ‘interlaced’ politically in the west during this era.

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<sup>33</sup> Sharp, *Whoop-up Country*, 80.

<sup>34</sup> Sharp, *Whoop-up Country*, 80.

Initially, it was easy for Euro-Canadians, Americans, and indigenous people to cross and re-cross the border. The Native peoples, for the most part, continued their former lifestyles and paid no attention to an invisible line created hundreds of kilometers away by white men who had never seen the land for themselves. However, from time to time, Natives drew the attention of the governments in the east, just like they had after the Cypress Hills massacre.

While Native peoples tended to travel back and forth across the border, they were aware that the Canadians and Americans regarded the border as something serious – especially the U.S. Cavalry (or ‘Blue Coats’) and the Mounties. The Dakota and Lakota Sioux, seeing the respect paid to the boarded by Canadian and American officials, were the first to use it to their advantage. While under threat, they referred to the border as the ‘Medicine Line’ knowing that it was strong with medicine that would stop the American Calvary in its tracks.<sup>35</sup> The Sioux used this tactic to their advantage whenever possible; for example, during the Dakota War in 1862 and the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876, the Sioux and other Native peoples fled to Canada to avoid reprisals and protect their people from American aggression. These are two examples of a kind of secret war that went on between the Canadian government and the United States over the Natives that would travel back and forth at their own will.

The Canadian government lacked much of the infrastructure to help support its Native population, which was hurt by the declining numbers of bison on the plains. The difficulty and unwillingness to aid the western plains Aboriginals led some within the Canadian government to come up with creative means of circumventing the issue. The Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest Territories, Edgar B. Dewdney, encouraged the Native peoples to dip south over the line in an effort to make the Native people a problem for the United States instead. Famously,

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<sup>35</sup> Rees, *Arc of The Medicine Line*, 5.

Dewdney claimed to have saved the Canadian government upwards of one hundred thousand dollars.<sup>36</sup> Not only did Dewdney brag about sending Natives south of the border, the United States was aggravated and suspicious that Canadian Native groups were heading south to raid and then return to Canada across the safety of the international border. Dewdney did not encourage the Natives to raid in the United States, but he did encourage the Native peoples to head there. Nevertheless, it would not be surprising that, at some point, while Canadian Natives were in the United States they might have raided, but not at the behest of Dewdney.

During the Red River Rebellion in 1870 in modern Manitoba, the Canadian government ended the conflict between itself and the recently created provincial government, in the most peaceful manner possible, with only one casualty. There was no fighting and the two sides negotiated an agreement resulting in very few casualties. It is significant to the historiography of the Canadian west that the peaceful resolution reached might not have been the government's first choice. Dewdney realized the problems that might arise if the government was not able to produce a show of force in the west, since he stated that negotiation was done from a weakened state. Dewdney wrote, "In a year or two with the railway in the centre of the continent we shall be in a position to dictate to the Indians. We are not so now, and any outbreak occurring this year or next would be disastrous."<sup>37</sup> Had Dewdney been in charge, Ottawa might have taken a different, or more violent, track in settling the Red River Rebellion.

Just shy of two decades later, the Canadian government did send an army west to stop the next large conflict centered in Saskatchewan called the Riel Rebellion, in 1885. While a rail line did not run to Saskatchewan, the volunteer army was sent to restore 'order' to the west. If Dewdney had had his way and the Canadian government was able to access a trans-continental

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<sup>36</sup> Sharp, *Whoop-up Country*, 155.

<sup>37</sup> Sharp, *Whoop-up Country*, 242.

railway, the often-characterized temperate relationship with the aboriginal people might have been perceived as more violent and domineering. Therefore, the relatively good relationship between Ottawa and the western indigenous population during the conflict, could have been, in some ways, the result of a lack of infrastructure, a problem that the United States did not have.

The train that Dewdney said was required to dictate the relations with the Native peoples in Canada was very important to the development of both countries. The United States won the race across the continent by laying track at an impressive rate. The American transcontinental rail line was finished a full fifteen years before Canada drove the last spike in its own line in 1885. American identity focused primarily on the future and the success of technology and civilization over the ‘savage’ New World. The young historian Frederick Jackson Turner wrote a thesis that highlighted the American experience’s focus on the future, the conflict, between old and new, and the relationship between the old and the new.<sup>38</sup>

Turner saw the future of the west as he saw the history of the east: a process of civilizing. Hunters and trappers would give way to farmers, and eventually industrialists, just as railways would take waves of Americans west establishing the higher order of civilization. The train was an essential tool for ensuring the progress of the American people, on par with the axe at its foundation.<sup>39</sup> Daniel Webster, an American senator, believed that the transformation of the country was a progressive march to what he considered to be perfection. What he meant was that the efforts of the American government and its people would change the country into a model of paradise on earth.<sup>40</sup> However, not all Americans thought that the American environment was inherently an obstacle to civilization. As historian David Nye has shown,

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<sup>38</sup> Fredrick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962).

<sup>39</sup> David Nye, *America as Second Creation: Technology and Narratives of New Beginnings* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 5.

<sup>40</sup> Nye, *America as Second Creation*, 18.

Abraham Lincoln thought it was unfortunate that the Adam of creation had not been blessed to set foot in the United States. Lincoln believed, unlike Webster, that the United States was already a paradise on earth. No matter the prevalent opinion, there was no debate that the railroad was essential to the future and strength of the United States. Walt Whitman believed that a transcontinental railroad would put the United States at the center of the world and ensure continuing success and wealth.<sup>41</sup> Overall, many believed the future looked brighter for the United States with a transcontinental railroad than without. In 1885, *Harper's Magazine* predicted that the world would one day speak English and be conquered not by an old civilization, but by the new United States.<sup>42</sup> It is evident that Americans on both sides of the 49th thought that the railroad was imperative for the country to grow and prosper, which is why it is so curious that Canada took an additional fifteen years to complete its railroad.

Part of the explanation for this delay that the rail line had a different meaning in Canada than it did in the United States. The United States was expanding its sphere of influence in the traditional sense using the railroad, while Canada expanded in order to incorporate British Columbia into the new nation. A deal was reached between Canada and British Columbia in which B.C. would join confederation if a transcontinental rail line was constructed. The Canadian government had a strong incentive to finish the railroad, yet the Canadian track was slowed because of the greater distance and the difficult terrain of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, which were far more daunting than the Rockies in the United States. In addition, Canada lacked the large population, industry, and investment that was present in the United States.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Nye, *America as Second Creation*, 172.

<sup>42</sup> Nye, *America as Second Creation*, 261.

<sup>43</sup> Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line*, 27.

In Canada, the terrain also included the Canadian Shield, a vast deposit of Precambrian rock that served as a hindrance to expansion west of Ontario. The rock severely limited settlement and did not allow for agriculture in any real capacity. While the land was rich for mining, the country had not utilized the land and had inadvertently created a large 'settlement gap' that also served to keep populations separated and segregated. Due to the bottleneck of the Canadian Shield, Canadians who crossed were perceived as 'easterners' - cultured, stable, and un-cruel; whereas the Americans that headed west were perceived as a more dangerous lot.<sup>44</sup>

Even though both countries built and operated transnational rail lines, the West was not easily 'won' or settled. On both sides of the border, the west still retained elements of wilderness, as most of the land was uninhabited and the traditional migratory tendencies of Native peoples led many settlers to view the lands as uninhabited. The large swaths of open land gave renegade or unfriendly elements space to freely move around. For the most part any small-scale violence in the United States was handled by some kind of military response. However, the expansive west and fluid nature of Native land-use gave the Calvary problems while trying to follow and confront offenders. When large-scale fighting broke out and whole tribes were no longer safe, the habit of hiding or melting into other camps was not an option for American Native peoples. In these cases, the military was so focused on the offenders that the only action for the Native peoples was to head to the safety of the Medicine Line and the protection afforded by international relations. The Sioux were particularly fond of seeking asylum in Canada, gaining it twice in large scale after the Dakota War 1862 and more famously after the Battle of Little Bighorn 1876.

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<sup>44</sup> Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country*, 100.

## Actors

The following cases highlight the value of Walter 's interlacing frontiers theory through characters that traveled back and forth across the border and the ripples of these travels echoed across the country. After the Dakota War in 1862, Little Crow led a band of Santee Sioux north into Canada and to the Red River Colony. Little Crow and his followers were given a small amount of food, but for the most part, the people of Red River wanted nothing to do with the Santee. After being rejected, Little Crow and his followers headed south back into the United States where Little Crow was shot and killed in Minnesota.<sup>45</sup> This case shows that while the people fleeing persecution could always run across the border into Canada they could not always stay there. Seen in this light, Canada was part of the wild west, but increasingly only as a temporary sanctuary that highlighted the differences between the Dominion and its southern neighbour.

The next high profile case of the Sioux using the border for protection was after the Battle of Little Bighorn, or Battle of Greasy Grass, in 1876. After the combined efforts of the Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho defeated the 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary at Little Bighorn, the bands disbanded and many headed north. The most famous of the exiles was Chief Sitting Bull of the Hunkpapa tribe, and after the humbling defeat at the hands of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, the United States' aim was to disarm or exterminate the Sioux to end the problems they were faced with many times over the course of the westward expansion.<sup>46</sup> Despite the seriousness of the situation that the Sioux were facing, the guarantee of safety in Canada was far from assured. Canadian officials shared any information they had on the location of the Sioux with the United States, who, at the same time, were doing everything they could to track the bands responsible for the

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<sup>45</sup> Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line*, 103.

<sup>46</sup> Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country*, 248.

loss at Greasy Grass.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, after Sitting Bull and his 4,000 followers reached Canada, Crowfoot of the Blackfoot offered to help the Royal Canadian Mounted Police force Sitting Bull and his followers back into the United States, where they might have been killed or arrested and prosecuted.<sup>48</sup> However, this did not happen and Sitting Bull and his followers made it into Canada where they found some protection in the form of an ally named Superintendent James Walsh.

While the Canadian government mandated Walsh to convince Sitting Bull and his people to head back south to the United States, the bond that the two men shared kept Sitting Bull and his followers in Canada. Even though the two men liked and greatly respected one another, the nature of their relationship created tensions. On one occasion, while Sitting Bull and Walsh argued, Walsh shoved Sitting Bull to the ground and kicked him after Sitting Bull had reached for a gun.<sup>49</sup> Eventually, the Canadian government saw Walsh as an obstacle in the removal of Sitting Bull and transferred Walsh to Fort Qu'Appelle, and the next year, Sitting Bull returned to the United States.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, it was not only Walsh's removal that convinced Sitting Bull to move on and give himself and his people up. The lack of bison in Canada, in addition to Canada's unwillingness to take care of 'American Indians,' forced Sitting Bull back over the border, though they managed to hold out for five years.<sup>51</sup> Once he was back in the United States, Sitting Bull was arrested and sent to a reservation. Buffalo Bill was able to get permission, using his military contacts, to enter negotiations with Sitting Bull and eventually signed him for one touring year.

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<sup>47</sup> Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country*, 249.

<sup>48</sup> Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country*, 255. See also Joseph Manzione, *I Am Looking North For My Life: Sitting Bull 1876-1881* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991), 52.

<sup>49</sup> Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country*, 283.

<sup>50</sup> Sharp, *Whoop-Up Country*, 283.

<sup>51</sup> Rees, *Arc of the Medicine Line*, 356.

This historical case is important for two reasons, one it illustrates the closeness of the border and its peoples. Sitting Bull traveled back and forth across the border and additionally McLaughlin, a Canadian, demonstrated some behavior that was atypical of the stereotypical Canadian. Second this story and its history frames Sitting Bull's interactions with Canadians during his show's 1885 tour of Canada and displays that Cody had his finger on the Canadian pulse, especially in relation to his casting of his show. Cody and Sitting Bull are important figures and those that help make their history also play roles in creating the myth of the transborder west.

While the more widely known cases happened with Americans hiding in Canada, Canadians also fled to the United States. In 1869, between the Dakota War exile and the Battle of Little Bighorn, the Métis community at Red River Manitoba rebelled against the Canadian government. For the most part, the confrontation was settled with little violence and the Métis were able to secure many of the rights that they sought. However, Louis Riel, the leader of the rebellion, was charged with murder and fled to Montana where he became a teacher and naturalized American citizen. It was at this time that Dewdney made his comment about the strength of the government and a future in which they would be able to dictate terms. This relatively bloodless rebellion sent Riel into exile for over fifteen years until he was called upon to return to Canada where he once again led a rebellion.

In 1885, Gabriel Dumont, a Métis living in modern day Saskatchewan, headed south to find and retrieve the exiled leader of the Red River Rebellion, Louis Riel. Dumont and his travel companions convinced Riel to return to Canada in order to once again fight the national government and secure the same rights in Saskatchewan, as he had in Manitoba. Riel returned to Canada and at once became the leader of the Riel Rebellion. With Dumont as the military leader

of the rebellion and Riel on the political and religious side, they were able to score some early victories.

However, the federal government would not negotiate with the Riel government, and sent volunteers west to squash the rebellion. Eventually, the Métis, out of ammunition and supplies, suffered a crushing defeat at Batoche<sup>52</sup> that sent the remaining Métis warriors running. Dumont easily avoided and evaded the government troops, often leading them in circles before disappearing. Dumont wanted to secure not only his escape but Riel's as well, but Riel refused to flee and turned himself over to the government. With Riel arrested, and eventually executed by hanging on November 16, 1885 in Regina, Dumont headed south to the American border and turned himself in to the American Cavalry. After a brief stay in jail, Dumont was deemed to be a political refugee and was released. In the summer of 1886, participants of the Riel Rebellion were granted general amnesty, but Dumont remained in the United States until 1888 and died later in 1906 of natural causes in his home at Batoche.

Through these four popular and important contributors to western history, Little Soldier, Sitting Bull, Louis Riel, and Gabriel Dumont, we can see a basis of a shared history of the Canadian and American Wests. These cases, Dakota War, Little Bighorn, Red River Rebellion, and Riel Rebellion, are particularly representative, as they were trans-border stories of western historical hallmarks. Not only were these cases similar, but these leaders also utilized the border as an asset to protect themselves from the government. These individuals all exemplify a universal North American archetype that joined the countries that were north and south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Two of these cases are even more important in relation to the construction of the

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<sup>52</sup> The description of the battle of Batoche and the events following depicted here draws from Walter Hildebrandt *The Battle of Batoche: Small British Warfare and the Entrenched Métis* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 2012).

west as seen through *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, as both Sitting Bull and Gabriel Dumont were hired by and toured with William 'Buffalo Bill' Cody.

Sitting Bull's time in Canada and his return to the United States helped to create a divided notion of the North American neighbours. In Canada, people today tend to believe, with the help of the televised *Canadian History Minute*, that James Walsh treated Sitting Bull benevolently yet, while their relationship was one of the best that Sitting Bull had with a white man, it was far from perfect. As historian and professor Grant MacEwan points out, the Ontario-born Walsh became a natural leader and soldier, proving himself by fighting off Fenian invasions.<sup>53</sup> He also helped to establish the NWMP by seeking men of 'sound constitution' who were able to ride and were able-bodied.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, he wanted men of good character who could read and write in English or French. The call for men was specific as it noted that men would not become rich, though at the end of three years they would receive 160 acres in either Manitoba or the territories.<sup>55</sup> Moving westward in Canada was not as financially promising as it was in the United States with its gold rushes and western boosterism.

At the first meeting between Walsh and Sitting Bull, Walsh warned that "good behaviour was a prime requirement" of living in Canada. This sentiment was immediately enforced when Walsh took some of Sitting Bull's people into custody for stealing horses, within minutes of the encounter.<sup>56</sup> After his long ride to find Sitting Bull's band, Walsh also took an opportunity to nap in one of the lodges of the Sioux, an act that helped differentiate him from other Americans, who would not so readily sleep among the hostile Sioux.<sup>57</sup> Walsh was able to put the Sioux at

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<sup>53</sup> Grant MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1973), 56.

<sup>54</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 55.

<sup>55</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 55

<sup>56</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 57 and 89.

<sup>57</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 79.

ease by stating that he would not send them back to the United States unless they broke the law, and, in turn, he created a kind of mutual trust by sleeping in the camp and not treating the Sioux with hostility.

MacEwan explains how this relationship was strong in the beginning; Sitting Bull still had informants across the plains and was able to pass on valuable information to Walsh. In an interesting deployment of the border as a maker of identities, the American government declared that Sitting Bull was now a Canadian, and it no longer had a problem with the Sioux.<sup>58</sup> However, As MacEwan demonstrates, the friendship was tested when Riel pressured groups north of the line saying that in case of war, Walsh would side with his white bosses in the east and turn away from his contacts in the west.<sup>59</sup> Walsh, for his part, wrote that if he could keep the Sioux loyal to him he would need no further help in fighting any war that came his way.<sup>60</sup> Walsh occasionally had his own outbursts while dealing with the unique situation that developed; he once yelled at Sitting Bull, telling the Chief that he was not Canadian and deserved nothing from Canada. The argument got physical soon after when Sitting Bull made a move for his weapon, but Walsh grabbed him and swung him out the door and into the street, kicking him. As MacEwan documents, Walsh immediately considered the repercussions of his actions and ordered a fallen tree to be moved into the street in front of his offices, conveying to any angered Sioux that crossing over the tree would be interpreted as an act of hostility and returned in kind.<sup>61</sup> Knowing Walsh was not to be tested, the crowd dispersed, and once again Walsh and Sitting Bull were able to work out their problem. Walsh was seen as a major obstacle to Sitting Bull leaving the country, as despite their disagreements the two men truly respected one another.

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<sup>58</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 140.

<sup>59</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 146.

<sup>60</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 146.

<sup>61</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 149.

Sitting Bull asked Walsh to represent him in Washington and Walsh agreed in principle, but was prevented from following through by the Canadian government.<sup>62</sup> When it was time for Walsh to move on, he was gifted with Sitting Bull's war bonnet as the aging Chief said that he was done fighting and would no longer need it.<sup>63</sup>

When Sitting Bull got to Standing Rock Reservation, Indian Agent James McLaughlin, a man who held him in nothing but contempt, confronted him. McLaughlin was born in Ontario and lived in Canada for about twenty years, and had met Sitting Bull but did not like him. Sitting Bull was a well-known individual at the time and people wanted to hire him to exhibit this famous man. The increased notoriety surrounding Sitting Bull gave him a kind of power in relation to his growing celebrity status, but McLaughlin denied all employment suitors for Sitting Bull in order to remake him into a docile reservation Indian.<sup>64</sup> Oddly enough, rumours persisted that Walsh and Sitting Bull would tour together, but these reports were unconfirmed and ultimately unfounded.<sup>65</sup> McLaughlin was of the opinion that Native peoples could be civilized and live among settlers, and that some were more civilized than others. For example, McLaughlin believed that graduates of the Carlisle residential school, which taught "white" values and skills to young Native children, were empirically better than their parents who had not had that same education.<sup>66</sup> McLaughlin thought Sitting Bull could be a dangerous individual, but he also believed he had many weaknesses and cited him as an arrogant coward with an "evil face and shifty eyes."<sup>67</sup> He feared that Sitting Bull's power among his people could be reactivated in

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<sup>62</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 176.

<sup>63</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 178. In 1913 the bonnet was donated to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto Ontario where it still sits.

<sup>64</sup> "Prologue," *The Journal of the National Archives*, vol. 1 no. 2 (Fall 1969): 20.

<sup>65</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 171.

<sup>66</sup> James McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910), 161.

<sup>67</sup> McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian*, 141, 182, 183.

a new war, but during his time at Standing Rock, McLaughlin credited himself with keeping the Chief out of trouble.<sup>68</sup>

It was at this time in 1885 that Cody, with the help of old military contacts, was able to enter negotiations with McLaughlin and Sitting Bull. Cody toured with Annie Oakley, whom Sitting Bull called ‘Little Sure Shot,’ and was able to hire Sitting Bull for the 1885 season. In the American cities, Sitting Bull was booed during his appearances,’ the American crowds had not forgotten the Battle of Little Big Horn and the death of much of the Custer family. However, when the tour reached eastern Canada, the crowds cheered him as a returned son, though the irony must have been lost on them with their own troubles in 1885.<sup>69</sup> At the end of the 1885 season, Sitting Bull decided to return to the reservation stating that, “the wigwam is a better place for the Red Man.” It seemed as if one year of the east was enough for Sitting Bull, much like it would be for Gabriel Dumont the following year.<sup>70</sup>

When Sitting Bull returned from touring, McLaughlin’s disdain for him increased, as he believed that the Chief’s time with Cody had inflated his ego. McLaughlin reported that Sitting Bull had lied about a meeting with the president,<sup>71</sup> boasted that he had the power to have white agents and staff fired, claimed a new title for himself, and announced new changes to the distribution of rations.<sup>72</sup> In five years time, McLaughlin had an opportunity to do away with Sitting Bull during the Ghost Dance, a religious movement, of 1890. McLaughlin saw Sitting Bull as a repetitive troublemaker and blamed him for the Ghost Dance, which led McLaughlin to begin designing a plan to remove leaders he saw as problematic. As tensions rose on the

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<sup>68</sup> McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian*, 183.

<sup>69</sup> “Prologue,” *The Journal of the National Archives*, vol. 1 no. 2 (Fall 1969): 23.

<sup>70</sup> “Prologue,” *The Journal of the National Archives*, vol. 1 no. 2 (Fall 1969): 26.

<sup>71</sup> “Prologue,” *The Journal of the National Archives*, vol. 1 no. 2 (Fall 1969): 26.

<sup>72</sup> “Prologue,” *The Journal of the National Archives*, vol. 1 no. 2 (Fall 1969): 26.

reservations, Cody began to worry for the safety of his old friend Sitting Bull. Cody was able to convince the army to allow him to visit Sitting Bull, talk to him, and deliver him to the United States military. Cody and others in the military believed that this cordial relationship would result in a peaceful resolution to the Ghost Dance,<sup>73</sup> yet McLaughlin refused to allow Cody to out-shine him and frantically wrote letters to stop Cody's mission. McLaughlin was successful and Cody was recalled just miles from visiting Sitting Bull, and McLaughlin would later write in his autobiography that he had probably saved Cody's life.<sup>74</sup>

McLaughlin received a letter from president Benjamin Harrison allowing him access to the army to secure the arrest of Sitting Bull, to which McLaughlin refused, favouring his Indian Police and a surprise arrest. McLaughlin sent his police to arrest Sitting Bull in the morning with orders to allow Sitting Bull no chance of escape "under any circumstances."<sup>75</sup> Sitting Bull was found in bed, and cooperated with the police when asked to get dressed and have his grey horse, a parting gift from Cody, prepared. By the time they were ready to leave, a crowd had formed and questioned the arrest, and McLaughlin described how Sitting Bull became nervous as to what his people would think of him if he were arrested and called for a fight.<sup>76</sup> Numerous other accounts stated that somewhere a gun went off and Sitting Bull was shot multiple times, dying on the scene. Thus, for McLaughlin a dangerous enemy was dead, but for Walsh a friend had died, and as MacEwan records, Walsh later wrote that Sitting Bull desired nothing but justice.<sup>77</sup>

Sitting Bull's time in Canada and his relationship with James Walsh became famous to Canadians as a demonstration of the friendship that formed between two men of different

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<sup>73</sup> 1890 orders from Nelson Miles to William Cody regarding the capture of Sitting Bull, Cody Collection, McCracken Research Library (MRL), Buffalo Bill Centre of the West, Cody Wyoming.

<sup>74</sup> McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian*, 211.

<sup>75</sup> McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian*, 218.

<sup>76</sup> McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian*, 220.

<sup>77</sup> MacEwan, *Sitting Bull the Years in Canada*, 209.

nationalities. Canadians see this as an example of the fair treatment given to the Native peoples by the Canadian government, though Sitting Bull's relationship with Indian agent James McLaughlin forms the other side of the coin. McLaughlin is seen as a power-hungry and vindictive man who stopped Cody's visit to Sitting Bull during the Ghost Dance Crisis, in favour of his Indian police force, who ultimately shot and killed Sitting Bull while arresting him. While the differences seem great and are possibly a product of the two countries' perspectives, this story played out on both sides of the border as McLaughlin was a born Canadian, and in the end, the men played a larger role than the government.

Generally, the contrast between the two countries is starker, but in reality there was quite a bit of overlap between the nations, and their roles changed and shifted often. These cases all depict a far more open and fluid relationship (and identities) on the western plains – one that more closely reflects the analysis historian Walter Sage advanced in the 1930's. From Sage's perspective, although the east viewed the United States and Canada as separate, the line was often blurred by the people living in the west. From alcohol and arms to the actors on the plains, the history of the west shared much. Though the contrast between the two countries was visible, there were also many similarities that bound the two countries together. Buffalo Bill was able to utilize this blurred line to great effect in his show by not only gathering these people but also being involved, to a great extent, in the real events on the western plain. Cody became a player in international relations while touring with Sitting Bull in Canada, and while hiring Dumont during his exile in the United States, he was able to hire two people who had a lasting impact on the western plains and allowed them to continue to transform the culture.

## Chapter Two

**“I Am Candid Enough To Admit That I Felt Very Much Elated Over This Notoriety.”**

This chapter reinforces Buffalo Bill Cody’s long-standing connection and relationship with Canada. Not only was Cody related to Canadians through blood, but his show contained Canadian content and advertisers made a point to highlight this when it was beneficial. This chapter presents evidence that shows not only that Cody advertised Canadian content to Canadian audiences, but that he also included Canadian material in advertisements throughout the show’s run in other jurisdictions – though at a modest rate. While Cody included Canadians in his show, this chapter reveals the ways in which Canadian viewers were actually conflicted when it came to the show. Audiences struggled with their relationship with the show and their own western history, both celebrating the acts as reflections of themselves and as something new and uniquely American. The Canadian reviews expressed in various newspapers highlight the Canadian struggle to relate and also to assert their national independence in the shadow of *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* show grounds.

Cody’s show was famous for using an aggressive and multifaceted marketing scheme to bring people to the show grounds and cities were plastered in marketing sheets prior to any touring stop. Some of the posters were small, but Cody and his advertising department also designed and hung billboard-sized prints made up of many smaller sheets. These large format posters gave a much better visual representation of the scale and scope of *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* and how much it had grown. Cody had, after all, taken a show that had originated in a

theater and expanded it in 1883 into a show that could not have fit inside a building until the special stand at Madison Square Garden was made in 1886.

The giant posters gave a true idea of what audiences could expect if they went to the Wild West - a show that was as big, and in some respects, bigger than real life. The posters always depicted an open sky as the 'playhouse' for *Wild West*, to portray the fact that the show was being held outside under the sun in the daytime and under the stars and electric lights in the evening. The show could not have even been performed under a tent, as the shots fired into the air would have reduced the canvas to ribbons after every performance. The open venue dissipated the smoke from the guns and allowed the dramas to contain fire, and, in the case of the train robbery, the smoke from the faux engine.

More often than not, Cody's sheet advertisements contained numerous characters in a state of action, brightly coloured to appear striking to any passer-by. Often, these advertisements contained little to no information about the location of the show or the number of days that it would play, as the goal of the posters was just to get peoples' attention. In addition to the poster art, Cody also bought advertising space in local newspapers. These newspaper ads, unlike the posters, told the city (or town) when the show was coming and for how many days it would be on. As well, Cody's notoriety often got him free newspaper coverage. For venues that had never hosted the show, it was common for the newspapers to run reviews written by journalists in other cities.

Depending on the year and the importance of the city, Cody would often hold a brief parade from the rail station to the fairgrounds where the show would take place. If the city dwellers found the arrival of the show to be particularly interesting or were excited to host Cody, they would sometimes host a small gathering such as the 'press dinner' held in Montreal in 1885

during the show's first visit to the city.<sup>78</sup> The press dinner, or any other additional onsite advertisement, was one of the last chances to get people to the show before they had to wait for press reviews, or word-of-mouth. Cody was both shrewd and generous, and was often able to impress the press and city officials with food and drink in order to gain favorable reviews. For these guests, Cody would often make a grand gesture such as a special dinner served and reportedly cooked by the Native performers in the show, or speeches delivered by Cody and the featured players. Overall, Cody went out of his way to create a positive impression so that the people invited would be talking about their time with Buffalo Bill for days.<sup>79</sup>

While Cody and his performers paraded and impressed the journalists and city officials, at the show grounds the canvas men erected a city within a city. Cody's show was by no means small and required the hard work of numerous people to operate, as it required over one hundred performers as well as a supporting cast. Canvas men transported and set up the support tents, including the ones for cooking and feeding all the people involved with the show. Ticket takers, security, veterinarians, blacksmiths, horseshoers, ushers, seamstresses, handymen, band members, concession workers, and, special to Cody's show, men who could operate and fix the electric lights used during the night time shows were all necessary. In addition to the Native performers, these actors typically brought their families with them; wives and children accompanied the performing men and were paid a small, but generous salary to go on tour. The women and children were involved in the show in a limited way, as they lived in the Native village where spectators could tour through both before and after the show. The women also often made crafts to sell to the interested audiences, and each woman was entitled to keep all the money she made crafting.

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<sup>78</sup> Unidentified Montreal Newspaper, 14-08-1885, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2647, Cody Collection, McCracken Research Library (MRL), Buffalo Bill Centre of the West, Cody Wyoming.

<sup>79</sup> Unidentified Montreal Newspaper, 14-08-1885, (MRL).

Cody's posters were the same over the course of each tour, but newspaper inserts and ads changed from one city to the next. During the Canadian tour of 1885, Cody's press department changed the newspaper advertisements. For example, on August 17<sup>th</sup> 1885, *The Daily British Whig*, Kingston, Ontario's newspaper, let readers know that the show was not only "America's National Entertainment," but that it was, "Something new, Realistic, Grand. ... The Greatest Novelty of the Century!"<sup>80</sup> To further entice possible viewers, the newspaper also printed that there would be "SEVEN GRAND BATTLE SCENES, similar to Fish Creek, Cut Knife and Batoche."<sup>81</sup> This simple sentence let the readers and potential viewers in Canada know that the *Wild West* included events that had played out over the course of the Red River Rebellion. This kind of 'from the headlines' advertisement would have enticed many viewers to come out and watch, not just for the entertainment that Cody promised, but for the chance to see what the battles on the western Canadian frontier would have looked like. This inclusion of Canadian history, and at the time it was hardly history, given the timeline, shows that "America's National Entertainment" was not limited to historical portrayals south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel but on a large scale, including Canada.

Interestingly, the listed battles featured multiple combatants. While Fish Creek and Batoche mostly consisted of Métis forces fighting against Canadian volunteers, the battle of Cut Knife consisted of Cree and Assiniboine bands against the RCMP, militia, and Regular troops. Cody's show would have done well with the Battle at Cut Knife, as his show displayed battle scenes between his white and Native performers, the latter being dressed in more traditional Native garb. On the other hand, Fish Creek and Batoche primarily had Métis men as the combatants, and their clothing was the typical clothing worn by settlers with some alterations,

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<sup>80</sup> Buffalo Bill's Wild West Advertisement, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, #2505, Cody Collection, (MRL), Buffalo Bill Centre of the West, Cody Wyoming.

<sup>81</sup> Buffalo Bill's Wild West Advertisement, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, #2505, (MRL).

rather than the eye-catching clothes worn by Native American performers. Cody and his press agents tried to highlight the mutual conflict between the two countries and to give the audiences in the east a sense of the style of combat.

At Cut Knife May 1885, the Canadian forces, under Lieutenant Colonel William Otter, attacked early in the morning with cannon and a Gatling gun on loan from the United States. After securing their women and children, the Native warriors launched quick successive attacks from two ravines with an attack from one direction that covered the retreat of the previous attack. Fine Day, the leader of the joint Cree Assiniboine people, began to flank the troops, and at this point the Native warriors dismounted and moved through wooded areas so as to not be seen. After hours of harassment from warriors, Otter began an organized retreat. Poundmaker then asked Fine Day to allow Otter and his troops to leave the battlefield unmolested, and had Fine Day refused, it is likely that Otter would have suffered massive casualties while navigating a marsh and fording a river, which they had done early in the morning before the Natives were aware of their presence.

Unlike in the typical narrative found in Cody's *Wild West* shows, the Canadian Native warriors had been able to protect their families and counterattack the federal troops, winning the day. Yet, Cody's presentations played out the opposite way. Typically, the whites would be attacked and then counterattack, ending with them driving the Native warriors away. On occasion, "Attack on an Indian Village" was an included segment that would play out in a similar fashion, only the Natives typically lost.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Cody's Scene Breakdowns can be found in his programs or in Louis Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and The Wild West Show* (New York, Vintage Books: 2005).

The only act that the Native performers could win against the white performers was “The Race of the Races.” This act, which pitted mounted racers of all the ethnic groups in the show in a race around the grounds that was not staged, and the fastest racer won fair and square every time it was performed. The Race of Races was also occasionally run on foot, and the same rules applied. While Cody was comfortable displaying the abilities of the Native performers, he was not as comfortable straying from the idea of the whites’ national identity as a slow but unstoppable moving force to control the continent, highlighted throughout the shows narrative.<sup>83</sup> While the historical battle of Cut Knife started out on horseback, the combatants eventually dismounted and fought a prolonged battle on the ground. Records of the Battles of Fish Creek and Batoche show that the fighting was almost entirely on foot and in the case of Batoche, the Métis dug trenches and formed breast works to shelter themselves. While there was some movement on the battlefield among the Métis, they were not at the break neck speed of *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* battles.

While the previously discussed advertisement could be seen as evidence that Cody and his press team did not know much about the Canadian West, it also stands as proof that the expectations for the Canadian west were close to that of their Southern neighbours. Not only were Cody and his press crew misinformed or possibly uninformed about the three famous contemporary battles, so were his audiences, the Canadians he played to. Additionally, while the three listed battles in Cody’s show did not play out exactly like the listed battles on the Canadian west, there were elements that would have also played out very similarly to the staged battles. Cody and his team picked the three battles because they had recently happened in the Canadian west and were therefore well-known to much of the audience. The familiarity with the content,

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<sup>83</sup> The show’s programs follow a narrative with the ‘wild’ moving towards the ‘civilized,’ with Native performers appearing first followed by white males and the typical closing piece being an “attack on the settlers cabin” which included a whole white pioneer family.

especially the violence, was the perfect way to draw crowds. While the re-enactments might not have been accurate, they all contained elements of the battles mentioned and were representative of skirmishes that took place on the plains.

Cody's posters rarely featured overt Canadian symbolism, yet there are a few posters that were more inclusive in terms of Canadian content. One 1893 poster in particular called *A Factor of International Amity* (see figure one<sup>i</sup>) includes what can be interpreted as a Canadian flag.<sup>84</sup> The poster includes Cody front and center, flanked on both sides by the soldiers of the world, each of whom is carrying the flag of their home country. The first few tiers of riders and flags are the American flag, the Union Jack, and the Scottish St. Andrews flag. The next group of flags are slightly obscured and include Germany, Spain, and Mexico. The remaining flag is greatly obscured by the other flags and riders in the foreground, and would appear to be another Union Jack. However, the scale of the flag is far too small; and in this obscurity, it is likely that it is the Canadian flag. In 1893, the Canadian flag was the Red Ensign with the Union Jack in the top left hand corner. Although, the flag cannot be definitively identified, the role that Canadians played in Cody's idea of the west adds to the probability that the flag is Canadian.

The poster "From Prairie to Palace," (see figure two<sup>ii</sup>) designed in 1910 to celebrate the 1887 tour of England, includes not only the American Flag but also the Red British Ensign that contains the Union Jack in the top quarter of the red background.<sup>85</sup> This could have been done for a few reasons. Historically, the Red Ensign had flown over the thirteen colonies that gained their independence from Great Britain, so the flag could have been included as homage to the United States history with Great Britain. This possibility leaves much to be desired, as the poster

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<sup>84</sup> Cody Archive digital resource <http://codyarchive.org/images/view/posters/1.69.171b> (accessed November 15, 2013).

<sup>85</sup> Jack Rennert, *100 Posters of Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, 1976), 110.

features two flags draped next to each other in front of the Queen in her royal box. It would have made little sense for the tour to celebrate this or to think that viewers would understand the homage. More likely, the pairing of the flags was meant to symbolize a shared history between the United States and all of the British Commonwealth. The last time many Americans would have seen anything that even closely resembled the British Red Ensign would likely have been the Canadian Red Ensign. This flag, however, did not feature the coat of arms to represent the Canadian provinces that had joined Confederation. While the 1910 show was not the original *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*, as Pawnee Bill's Wild West and Far East Company had joined in, the story of the west remained the same. Additionally, the poster depicts a scene from Cody's own history and not that of Pawnee Bill or the combination of the two shows.<sup>86</sup>

While Cody's show did make an effort to include Canadian elements in the advertisements, Cody did not need to go back too far in his own history to find Canadian content. Cody's father was born and raised in Canada and his paternal side had all lived in Canada for many years. Philip Cody, William Cody's grandfather, was the second settler of what would become the Toronto Township of Peel County in Upper Canada. Philip was born in Oxford, Massachusetts on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1770, and began his homestead in Peel County in the fall of 1806.<sup>87</sup> The Cody family had previously moved to Canada in 1803 for a different plot of land, and was comprised of eleven children, eight of whom were born in Canada, including William's father Isaac, born in 1811. Due to the location and timing, the Cody family would have witnessed the War of 1812. Philip Cody built a tavern and inn on his property and eventually donated an acre

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<sup>86</sup> Gordon William (Pawnee Bill) Lillie was founder of one of the many other Wild West shows that sprang up in the wake of Cody's success. Like Cody, Lillie had ties to the west and used his minor celebrity to form and operate his show. Lillie used his contacts in the Pawnee community to hire primarily Pawnee performers, and eventually gave his show a decidedly far eastern feel well before Cody changed the format of his show. The two shows combined in 1908 forming "The Two Bill's Show" which lasted until 1913 when it went bankrupt and was foreclosed.

<sup>87</sup> Kathleen Hicks, *Dixie: Orchards to Industry* (Mississauga Library System: Mississauga, 2006), 7. available online at [http://www.mississauga.ca/file/COM/9635\\_DixieBook\\_PartOne.pdf](http://www.mississauga.ca/file/COM/9635_DixieBook_PartOne.pdf) (accessed December 3, 2013).

of land to the township for the construction of a chapel for the community in 1810.<sup>88</sup> The chapel would become the Dixie Union Chapel, which serviced all protestant denominations and functioned as a town hall. Isaac likely would have been baptised in the Chapel that his father helped to found, and it also serviced Native Americans who had converted. Philip also served as Toronto Township's first constable, but even the constable was not above the law, as he was fined for selling some of his liquor to the local Native population, a trait that his grandson took up when he sold whiskey to Irish railroad labourers.<sup>89</sup> In 1829, Philip sold his property in Peel and moved his family to Cleveland, Ohio.

Isaac Cody, Philip's son and William's father, was born in Peel County and was baptised in Upper Canada. At the age of seventeen, Isaac moved along with his family to Cleveland where he eventually married. Isaac was twice a widower and began accompanying his older brother Elijah and his family, wandering the state looking for something, as he, like many before him, was a restless soul. He eventually found what his heart was looking for in Scott County, Iowa, and travelled back to Cleveland to pick up his daughter Martha from his first marriage. He then went to Cincinnati to marry for the third time, a woman named Mary Laycock who would become William's mother.<sup>90</sup> The family settled in Le Claire and Isaac built a small cabin two miles west, which was the eventual birthplace of William on 26 February 1846.

There is speculation that in 1847 the then infant William Cody was taken to Canada and baptised in the church that his grandfather had help to found.<sup>91</sup> The story includes Isaac taking William to Canada to visit his family, but the Cody family had moved to Cleveland in 1829. The

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<sup>88</sup> Hicks, *Dixie*, 7.

Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*, 49.

<sup>89</sup> Hicks, *Dixie*, 7.

<sup>90</sup> Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press: 1960), 8.

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.waynecook.com/apeel.html> (accessed December 11, 2013).

only family that Isaac had in Canada was one of his sisters, Nancy, who remained behind with her husband. While it is possible that Isaac did travel back to Canada with his infant son, my research suggests that it is unlikely as he had a business venture to maintain. There is an oral tradition that baby William was baptised in the Dixie Union Chapel by a descendent of the Cody line (though not William's) and also a local Peel County teacher and historian.<sup>92</sup> Mildred Bellegham, the local teacher, stated that she had seen William Cody's baptismal record.<sup>93</sup> However, the records were destroyed in a 1924 fire, so no verification can be made. Harming the argument is Isaac's record as a tireless worker who continually took jobs and moved his family deeper into the American frontier. Even so, the Dixie Union Chapel bears a plaque stating that "The Hon. Col. Wm. F. Cody 'Buffalo Bill'" was baptised at the church, Peel County shares a collective memory that 'Buffalo Bill' was baptised there.<sup>94</sup> Through local history, the Cody legacy was alive and well in eastern Canada.

In 1854, after travelling further west with his family, Isaac crossed into Kansas territory and allegedly became its first legal settler.<sup>95</sup> It was in Kansas where Isaac eventually spoke out as a free soil settler, which led to him being stabbed and wounded, followed by his untimely death in 1857 from a particularly bad cold.<sup>96</sup> Isaac was likely a 'free soiler' as opposed to an abolitionist, as Helen Wetmore's 1899 book suggests. William Cody's 1879 autobiography clearly suggests that Isaac Cody did not want African Americans, either free or slaves, in Kansas

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<sup>92</sup> Hicks, *Dixie*, 10.

<sup>93</sup> Hicks, *Dixie*, 10.

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.waynecook.com/apeel.html> (accessed December 11, 2013).

<sup>95</sup> Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill*, 12.

<sup>96</sup> Free-soilers, were settlers who believed that new states should be free of slaves and former slaves, excluding African Americans in any way. Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill*, 14. Also, William F. Cody, *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody Known as Buffalo Bill* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 41. Helen Wetmore Cody and Zane Grey, *Buffalo Bill Last of the Great Scouts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 15.

in any capacity,<sup>97</sup> as he wrote: “My father, who had shed the first blood in the cause of the freedom of Kansas.” He gave his father a starring role in historical Bleeding Kansas lead up to The Civil War,<sup>98</sup> a fact that served Cody well when he created a name for himself as a central figure in American western history, aside from his connection to Canada.

Even if Cody had not been to Canada before the show toured there in 1885, he still had a connection to the country. Cody kept in regular contact with a cousin, Frank Cody, who had experience and interests in mines in Canada. Frank was asked regularly about the mining industry by his famous cousin who signed his letters with “cousin Will,” linking both the Cody name and the two histories closer together.

Cody invested the money he made touring with *Wild West* in a number of different ventures: The TE Ranch, the Irma Hotel, and Pahaska Tepee Lodge, to larger investments like the town of Cody Wyoming, the Cody irrigation project, and Cody’s venture into the expanding medium of motion pictures, The Historical Pictures Company. All of these investments added to his legacy and were in some ways successful. However, Cody also purchased some mining outfits in Arizona, outside of Tucson. The Campo Bonito mine works was an abysmal failure for Cody, and it was the subject of many letters sent to his cousin Frank in Canada. Cody had intended the Bonito mine to be his retirement plan. While he was making large sums of money touring his show, though he spent just as much founding his town, building irrigation, and constructing a dam.<sup>99</sup> Cody was also known to be very generous with his money, often buying drinks for others and entertaining in his off-time. But, the Bonito mine never did turn a substantial profit and the promising reports from the mine operators never came to fruition, as

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<sup>97</sup> Wetmore and Grey, *Buffalo Bill Last of the Great Scouts*, 15. Cody, *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody Known as Buffalo Bill*, 41.

<sup>98</sup> Cody, *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody Known as Buffalo Bill*, 43.

<sup>99</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America*, 434.

the big strike always seemed right around the corner. Cody began to take friends and acquaintances around the mine, hoping that they might invest in the operation and take some of the pressure off him. While he was in need of other investors, Cody never lied about the operation or its unprofitability, but he did talk of the future of the mine and the strike that he was told would eventually come.<sup>100</sup>

Cody's letters to his cousin Frank were often in reference to the reports that he was receiving from the Bonito mines. Cody was not a miner and knew very little of the industry, so he trusted the judgement and valued the feedback that Frank gave him. While Cody had many business ventures that he had little experience in, they were typically ventures that he could pick up or that he found relatable. His hotels and his ranch were quite easy to understand and operate but Cody did not, and could not, micro-manage the mining operation outside of Tucson from the road or from his home base in Wyoming. This problem emphasizes the significance of his letters, as he depended on the knowledge he gained from Frank situated thousands of kilometers away. Cody's letters often included some kind of invitation for Frank to come to Wyoming to visit Cody in his new town, if there was a chance that the tour might stop in Detroit or London.<sup>101</sup> Cody also asked for Frank's input on maps and other materials and eventually requested for those items to be sent to Johnny Baker who was trusted to look at the mining operation for Cody.<sup>102</sup>

Cody explained in a letter that he had to cancel a trip to Toronto to see his cousin when he was informed he would be granted access to the Pine Ridge Reservation to hire "thousands of

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<sup>100</sup> Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*, 434.

<sup>101</sup> William Cody to Frank Cody Travel Plans. Ms 6, Box 14, Folder 7, #223, Folder 12, #'s 298, 300, 3019.3. (MRL).

<sup>102</sup> William Cody to Frank Cody Mining Talk. Ms 6, Box 14, Folder 12, #'s 299, and 300. Cody Collection, (MRL).

Indians and a consignment of U.S. Cavalry” for use in his burgeoning movie career.<sup>103</sup> In the same letter, he tried to make plans to get to Detroit where he thought Frank could meet him so that they could “talk mines.”<sup>104</sup> Cody’s letters concerning the Camp Bonito mine did eventually change tone when he discovered fraudulent work at the mines. He replaced the operator with someone he could trust. The mine began producing large quantities of tungsten ore, which was the metal used for the electric light bulb. He began to telegram Frank with news of big tungsten strikes and eventually sent a telegram that simply read, “Bully come will meet you Tucson Rock Island best write.” Cody’s excitement in the telegram is undeniable, as he must have believed that the investment was finally paying off.<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately, while spending began to fall under control and the Tungsten operation was profitable, Cody was unable to stay retired and had to go back to work until 1914. The busy touring schedule and financial pressures for his other venture began to wear on Cody, who felt that he could not continue under the strain. A letter from May 31<sup>st</sup> stated: “I am not feeling well today, as I was simply worked to death.”<sup>106</sup> Cody trusted Frank a great deal, and as the letter illustrates, he often opened up to his far-off cousin. Fortunately, Cody was able to retire from working for the Sells-Floto Circus after the 1914 season.

The Cody name carried so much interest, that when Cody’s Canadian cousin visited friends in Astoria, Oregon, the trip received a few paragraphs in the local newspaper. The article made sure to note that this cousin often wintered in Florida and was involved in the oil industry. Furthermore, the paper highlighted an upcoming business trip of Frank’s to Mexico and supposed that he would quickly win over the Mexican people just as his famous cousin had done

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<sup>103</sup> William Cody to Frank Cody Tour Hiring. Ms 6, Box 14, Folder 12, # 3019.3. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>104</sup> William Cody to Frank Cody Tour Hiring, (MRL).

<sup>105</sup> William Cody to Frank Cody, Bully! Telegram, Ms 6, Box 14, Folder 7, # 312. Cody Collection, (MRL). Rock Island is located in what is now Theodore Roosevelt Lake in Tonto National Forest.

<sup>106</sup> William Cody to Frank Cody, Billy Sick, Ms 6, Box 14, Folder 12, # 298. Cody Collection, (MRL). While the letter has no year dated it has to have come from the 1914 season as it is written on Sells-Floto letter head and the location is given as Cle Elum Washington where the tour played on May 31<sup>st</sup>.

with the world.<sup>107</sup> The connection between Cody and Canada is evident through his personal life; however, it is also important to look at the way Canadians viewed his show.

Newspaper articles about Cody take two different forms in Canada. They were either pre-arrival reviews of what to expect from cities that had already been visited by ‘Wild West,’ or reviews that were written during or after the show had visited the city of publication. When broken down further, the articles display two kinds of subsets - those that appear to be press-packages for the papers to run, and those where the reporter actually did some research and reporting. Both were informative in their own way because they each gave a glimpse of how the city saw the show or how ‘Wild West’ fashioned itself to potential viewers.

From the start of Cody’s career, he was often described as a ‘picture of manhood’ or a ‘fine specimen of manliness.’ His manliness was due, in no small part, to the upbringing he received on the western frontier and his work beyond that boundary. While the language to describe Cody is often the same the language used to describe the geography of the frontier often is not. In an article appearing in *The Daily British Whig* that cited an article already published in *The Boston Journal*, the reporter wrote that Buffalo Bill was “one of the finest types of manhood this continent has ever produced.”<sup>108</sup> While this article makes note that Cody was one of the greatest men that the continent had produced, it did not claim Cody as a native son of the United States, but implied that he be regarded as a representative of the whole of the continent. Some of the Canadian papers did see him as something different, although this can be attributed to his ‘western heritage,’ and not necessarily his being American.

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<sup>107</sup> *Evening Astorian-Budget*, Astoria Oregon, Ms 6, Box 23, Folder 15, # 1434. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>108</sup> *The Daily British Whig*, August 6, 1885, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 38, # 2527. Cody Collection, (MRL).

The first large-scale newspaper Canadian article devoted to Cody appeared in *The Montreal Herald + Daily Commercial Gazette* on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1885 marking the approximate midway point of Cody's time in Montreal, his first tour stop in Canada. Among the multiple toasts and speeches given when Cody's show arrived, one of note is that of the mayor Honoré Beaugrand. Born in Lower Canada, Beaugrand was a soldier, journalist, writer, and newspaper owner who traveled extensively in the United States until he returned to Montreal and eventually was elected as mayor. Beaugrand spoke highly of Cody and his show and noted the benefits of life on the "western prairies," where men were raised with certain ideals, athleticism being at the forefront.<sup>109</sup> Beaugrand's choice to say "western prairies" as opposed to United States, or even America, gives some indication that he might have believed that the Canadian prairie also gave its people the same opportunities (or hardships) that the west in the United States offered. Later in his speech, he alluded to a possible difference between Canada and the United States, when he stated, "I honor and admire the man who has had the courage, the hardihood, to transplant to this northern and seemingly inhospitable soil a faithful representation of the daily scenes of the West."<sup>110</sup> While this might seem like an indication that Beaugrand believed that Canada and the United States were far different from one another, he may have meant that the difference was great between the American West and the Canadian East and that the two countries had similar western experiences. The article has countless references to the 'foreignness' of the whole production, down to the method by which the guests were served their dinner, on sharpened skewers. While Beaugrand's words might lead some to question the kinship between the American and Canadian Wests, other articles drive home the point that Canada and the United

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<sup>109</sup> *The Montreal Herald, + Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 14, 1885, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2647. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>110</sup> *The Montreal Herald, + Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 14, 1885, (MRL).

States were forever closely related. Indeed, much of the article is devoted to the only man that could rival Cody as the most famous man with the company that year, Sitting Bull.

Sitting Bull led his people north over the international border between Canada and the United States to protect them after the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876. While in Canada, he became fast friends with Major Walsh as well as native leaders Poundmaker, Big Bear, and Crowfoot. Sitting Bull spoke freely through a translator of his deep respect for Canada and Canadians stating that he “liked the white men I meet in Canada.”<sup>111</sup> He further elaborated that “the United States people did not treat me well,” suggesting that Sitting Bull saw a difference between the two countries.<sup>112</sup> Sitting Bull closed his interview stating, “I want to see my friends, Major Walsh and Captain McDonald, who are good white men, and whom I respect highly.”<sup>113</sup> While Sitting Bull differentiated between the white people he could trust and those he could not, this is a simplification that relies on the political relationship that existed between Canada and the United States, and does not truly speak to the difference between the two nations western inhabitants or the makeup of their peoples.

*The Ottawa Daily Citizen* pre-reviewed the show on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1885, making note that the show offered a realistic and life-like representation of the West and broadened the scope by writing, “on the frontier of civilization.”<sup>114</sup> The writer of the article predated Cody’s format change by eight years, into one that included all frontier people. For this writer, the show was about so much more than the American west. In the same article, the paper reprinted a section from the *Montreal Post*, which noted that the show was a display of what “western life in the States was some few years ago.” In this case, the author did make note that this seemed to be an

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<sup>111</sup> *The Montreal Herald, + Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 14, 1885, (MRL).

<sup>112</sup> *The Montreal Herald, + Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 14, 1885, (MRL).

<sup>113</sup> *The Montreal Herald, + Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 14, 1885, (MRL).

<sup>114</sup> *The Ottawa Daily Citizen*, Ms 6 Box 3 Folder 28 # 2651. Cody Collection, (MRL).

American story, or at least in this part it was.<sup>115</sup> An advertisement appearing in a Kingston newspaper billed the program as “America’s National Entertainment,” while also making note that the show included “Seven Grand Battle Scenes, Similar to Fish Creek, Cut Knife and Batoche.”<sup>116</sup> This particular case shows that the advertisers believed that the Canadian and American western stories overlapped in some regard. It is possible that the difference is apparent between English and French speaking Canada, because in another English speaking paper, the author used the term ‘western’ instead of ‘American’ when he referred to the life depicted.<sup>117</sup> The French papers also seemed to be more interested in what the show might eventually mean for the Canadian West.

In *The Montreal Herald + Daily Commercial Gazette*, the reporter considered the strong possibility that the settlement of the Canadian west would have to overcome the issues that the Americans had to deal with in the settlement of their western lands.<sup>118</sup> In the interview portion, Cody, when asked about the settlement of the west, spoke of his time as a freight driver. Displaying his lack of knowledge, he assumed that the Hudson’s Bay Company had moved supplies in the same manner. The interviewer then asked about the rebellions that were currently happening in Saskatchewan, and Cody was curious about these since, in his view, the Canadian Natives were typically, “quiet and friendly.”<sup>119</sup> Cody suggested that the government should respond with violence, even though the reporter made him think the prior treatment of Native peoples was ‘good.’ In a move to bring the conversation back to the touring troop, Cody mentioned that Sitting Bull had been approached to join the rebellion north of the border. To

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<sup>115</sup> *The Ottawa Daily*, Citizen # 2651. (MRL).

<sup>116</sup> *The Daily British Whig*, Kingston, August 17, 1885, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2505. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>117</sup> *The Ottawa Daily Citizen*, August 17, 1885, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2631. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>118</sup> *The Montreal Herald + Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 17, 1885, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2506. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>119</sup> *The Montreal Herald + Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 17, 1885, (MRL).

close the article, the reporter warned Cody that some of the spectators in Ottawa had been fighting in the West, and the last time they had seen a Native person was down the barrel of a gun.<sup>120</sup> This article illustrates the difference between the French and English Canadians in the East. While saying that people from Ottawa had fought in the West, the reporter was implying also that the Montreal crowd had not, which is possibly true as the French, for the most part, sided against the government and did not volunteer for the fighting. This story, once again, highlights the difference that existed in Canada between the French and English speakers.

As the tour moved westward and out of French Canada, the reporting took a firmer stance that Cody's show had both international interest and Canadian connections. For example, newspapers continued to ask Sitting Bull about his Canadian friends and paid particular attention to Major Walsh.<sup>121</sup> Sitting Bull also attracted attention in Toronto when a reporter asked him if he ever thought of the loss of life at the Battle of Little Bighorn. The question was asked with the intent to provoke Sitting Bull, yet, in measured tones, he responded, "I have answered to my people for the loss of life on our side; let Custer answer to his own people for the loss on his."<sup>122</sup> This dialogue suggests the reporter was trying to bait Sitting Bull to make his story more exciting, as this was an aberration in the general tone of interviews with Sitting Bull. More often than not, reporters would ask about Sitting Bull's time in Canada and his friend Walsh, but would not ask baiting questions. The interview shifted from the question concerning Custer to Sitting Bull's interest in Poundmaker, Big Bear, and Walsh. In response, Sitting Bull was

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<sup>120</sup> *The Montreal Herald, + Daily Commercial Gazette*, August 17, 1885, (MRL).

<sup>121</sup> *The Daily British Whig Kingston August 20 1885* Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2508. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>122</sup> *The Globe Toronto*, August 24, 1885, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, no document #. Cody Collection, (MRL).

particularly interested in knowing if Walsh had spoken of him.<sup>123</sup> Sitting Bull then reiterated that he had been asked to join the rebellion in the Northwest Territories.

On the last day the troupe performed in Hamilton, the reporter praised the show as a “vivid picture of frontier life.”<sup>124</sup> The same reporter guessed that the countless children in attendance would go to sleep dreaming of being heroes of the west, rescuing “fair maidens” from dime novel villains in the “boundless west.”<sup>125</sup> For the children in attendance, the difference between Canada and the United States would have been negligible; impressionable audiences saw the show without the baggage of international politics or borders. The Hamilton paper was the only one to make note of the famed ‘Cowboy Band’ that played music throughout the performance. That reporter wrote that the band was skilled and played exceptionally well, except for their rendition of “God Save The Queen.”<sup>126</sup> It would appear that the band was viewed as distinctly American, yet the show seemed to have strong Canadian character, or it was presented as such to interest Canadian audiences.

As can be seen through the newspapers during the 1885 tour, Canadians were interested and impressed by the show. Importantly, they also took the time to connect Sitting Bull with their own history, and when they did not make the connection, Cody and his publicists helped them along the way. It would seem that there was a palpable difference between the way the English and French speakers interacted with the show, the people, and history that the show presented. It would be twelve years before *Buffalo Bill’ Wild West* returned to Canada, and by then, the tone of the show had changed dramatically. In some cases, the format change confused the audiences and hampered their ability to situate themselves in the show, yet the changes also

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<sup>123</sup> *The Globe*, August 24, 1885, (MRL).

<sup>124</sup> *The Hamilton Daily Spectator*, August 27, 1885, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2642. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>125</sup> *The Hamilton Daily Spectator*, August 27, 1885, (MRL).

<sup>126</sup> *The Hamilton Daily Spectator*, August 27, 1885, (MRL).

gave Canadians a stronger historical place within the drama. This is not to say that the show removed Canadians from the display, just that the descriptions of the message changed from one tour to the next.

When the *Wild West* program returned to Canada in 1897, it had changed formats, and added the ‘Rough Riders of the World’ to its list of attractions. The changes to the format and the growth the show had undergone in the intervening years changed reporters’ focus and the discursive nature of the reports. Between visits, *Wild West* had toured Europe and been enthusiastically loved by all. Perhaps most important was the support of the European royals; at the start of the 1897 return to Canada, a newspaper mentioned that not only had the kings and queens witnessed the show, but they also respected the struggle that was necessary to open the West to the commerce and ‘civilization’ of the world.<sup>127</sup> This appreciation from the rulers of Europe boosted the profile of an already successful venture. Additionally, technology also began to have a more central theme in the show, and the newspaper in Sherbrooke made a point to tell its audience that the show was powered and lit by a portable electric plant that could generate 100,000 candle watts of power. Fourteen days later, three days before the show arrived in Sherbrooke, the paper ran another story warning potential viewers to be on the lookout for pickpockets, which were rather new to Canada but prolific in the United States.<sup>128</sup> While portions of the show were relevant to Canada and the Canadian West, the show did bring elements that were strictly American, at least to the reporter and readers in Sherbrooke.

The day before *Wild West* headed north to Sherbrooke, the *Daily Record* ran one final report covering a third facet of the show. By the time the show had returned, greater focus was placed on the show not just as a performance, but as a learning experience for viewers. The

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<sup>127</sup> *Sherbrooke Daily Record*, June 1, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2557. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>128</sup> *Sherbrooke Daily Record*, June 15, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2603. Cody Collection, (MRL).

paper recorded that Cody had, “opened a great school of anthropology,” and the entertainment value was still there as well.<sup>129</sup> The report also made mention of “the cowboy-nerve-strung product of the new world.”<sup>130</sup> This portion draws attention to the inclusion of not only Canada but also Mexico and Argentina in the cowboy or western culture that Cody focused most of his show on. The inclusion of ‘the new world’ placed other countries in the hemisphere on equal footing with the United States when it came to the question of the international importance of ‘western’ history and entertainment. The tour stop in Ottawa created an even more personal attachment to Canada during the 1897 trip, and *The Citizen* did multi-day coverage of the tour. On June 28<sup>th</sup>, the review praised the depiction of athleticism and outdoor sports, and the reporter went on to state that the spectacle was very ‘Canadian’ in nature.<sup>131</sup> In the next day’s coverage, the reports made note of a Montana cowboy living in Ottawa who was asked if he wanted to ride one of the bucking broncos, to which he agreed.<sup>132</sup> While the cowboy might have been an American, he was living in Canada. The relocation from the west or east paid little attention to the national divide.

The inclusion of the ‘Rough Riders of the World’ also gave Canadians the option to inject their own history into the show in a far less direct way than claiming the cowboy or the lifestyle. Canadians were particularly interested in the inclusion of the British Calvary into the show, and, in turn, the British allowed Canadians to see themselves in the saddle with the British during the Rough Rider parade. In Peterborough, a member of the Canadian military discussed the merits of the Canadian volunteers with the members of the English Calvary, to the delight of

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<sup>129</sup> *Sherbrooke Daily Record*, June 17, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2552. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>130</sup> *Sherbrooke Daily Record*, June 17, 1897, (MRL).

<sup>131</sup> *The Citizen Ottawa Ontario*, June 28, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2637. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>132</sup> *The Citizen Ottawa Ontario*, June 29, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2559. Cody Collection, (MRL).

the Peterborough newsman.<sup>133</sup> By the time the tour reached Hamilton, a reporter noted that the English Lancers looked slightly out of practice and their standards might have lowered during their time with the touring company.<sup>134</sup> The Canadian audience apparently felt as if they had some stake in the British contingent of soldiers, and even though the British troops might have looked a little out of sorts, they still received the loudest applause during the show, especially when the Union Jack was in view.<sup>135</sup>

The coverage of the show in Chatham was interesting for many reasons; prior to the show's arrival, the paper ran a few articles that separated Canada from the United States. In one issue the paper wrote, "Canada has seldom been invaded by a more popular conqueror than Col. Cody."<sup>136</sup> This comment might be an allusion to the War of 1812, or to the many Fenian invasions launched a few decades before. However, it is more likely an expression of Cody's ability to take all the attention of a city and focus it on *Wild West*. Still, the language does give some indication that the paper felt the show was a foreign entity, hence the use of the word 'invasion.' Nevertheless, Chatham gave Canada some of the credit for the international success of the program, reminding readers that Cody was in Canada when he realized the potential success that *Wild West* could have in an international market.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, the writer stated that it was the story of the settlement of the continent that was interesting to European audiences, thereby including Canada in the greater story of western expansion.<sup>138</sup> It might be that the difference in tone came from different writers, or that the confusion came from the unclear

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<sup>133</sup> *The Daily Examiner Peterborough Ontario* July 3 1897 Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2535. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>134</sup> *Hamilton Spectator*, July 16, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2614. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>135</sup> *Hamilton Spectator*, July 17, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2564. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>136</sup> *Chatham Daily Planet*, July 8, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2672. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>137</sup> *Chatham Daily Planet*, July 9, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2650. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>138</sup> *Chatham Daily Planet*, July 9, 1897, (MRL).

nature of Canadian and American western histories. Whatever the case may be, the two articles simultaneously divided and combined the histories of the North American continent.

The City of Brantford ran articles before, during, and after the show appeared in town, each having a different focus. Before the show arrived, the focus was very much on describing the believability and authenticity of the performers. The article made sure to note that all of the skills on display had real western applications and nothing was displayed solely to entertain or amaze.<sup>139</sup> The writer went on to say that bald men wearing wigs could be ‘scalped’ in the arena for the entertainment of the audience, but such a display would be against Cody’s wishes and be phoney and disingenuous. The dangers of the show were also touched on; the risk that the Canadian cowboys took while riding bucking broncos often led to “broken bones, severe contusions and permanent internal injuries.”<sup>140</sup> The article printed on the day of the exhibition included very little of note, except the announcement of a calf being born in town, which, as per Cody’s tradition, was named Brantford,<sup>141</sup> thus insuring that a small piece of Canada was always with the show. The same article also mentioned the cowboys’ origins from the western states and territories, though it is unclear as to whether the term ‘territories’ is meant to also include modern day Saskatchewan and Alberta. If so, the writer joined the two countries through the cattle industry and the creation of the cowboy profession and culture.

The day after the two shows, the paper once again made note of how the show portrayed an authentic version of a past that was quickly fading in favour of industrialization, so much so that the author went so far as to say the past displayed in the show was “obsolete.”<sup>142</sup> The paper also made note of the warm reception the British flag received when it appeared, writing, “One

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<sup>139</sup> *Brantford Courier*, July 14, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2630. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>140</sup> *Brantford Courier*, July 14, 1897, (MRL).

<sup>141</sup> *Brantford Courier*, July 15, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2633. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>142</sup> *Brantford Courier*, July 16, 1897, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2529. Cody Collection, (MRL).

notable incident of both performances was the enthusiasm which became aroused when the Union Jack appeared. ‘Here’s our flag’ was the general remark, and the thousands applauded with might and main.”<sup>143</sup> The Canadian audiences identified with the British military presence in the show. The excitement over the Union Jack and the British players gives credence to the idea that the Canadians who saw the show could link the histories of Britain and the United States, and of Canada as well. Once again, the show left Canada on a high note and with positive reviews in all cities visited. It would not be until 1909 that Cody’s *Wild West* would return to Canada, and in the 1909 season he was not alone; Cody had joined forces with Pawnee Bill to form ‘The Two Bill’s Show,’ as it was informally called.

The 1909 Cody shows stopped in mostly the same locations as in 1885 and 1897, though the 1909 tour consisted of whistle stops lasting for more than a day, only once. *The Toronto Telegram* wrote of the train Cody had built to capitalize on the popularity of the Great Train Robbery motion picture of 1903.<sup>144</sup> The article also stated: “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West is as distinctly American as Niagara Falls, the Rockies or the boundless plains.”<sup>145</sup> This was perhaps written to give credit to the United States as the sole owners of the kind of ‘western-ness,’ but had this been the case, it missed its mark, almost comically. For one, the Horseshoe Falls lies on the Canadian side of the border and is actually called Canadian Falls, while the Rocky Mountains run north-south through both Canada and the United States. Also, one quick look at a topographic map shows that Saskatchewan holds part of the ‘boundless plains.’ Therefore, it is far more likely that the reporter was including Canada in with the United States in relation to the Wild West.

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<sup>143</sup> *Brantford Courier*, July 16, 1897 (MRL).

<sup>144</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, June 26, 1909, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2558. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>145</sup> *Toronto Telegram*, June 26, 1909 (MRL).

However, two days later in Hamilton, another reporter took a different view of the breadth of the show. In a description appearing in the *Spectator*, the writer refers to the native performers as being drawn from “British America to Mexico from the Missouri river to the Pacific,” and the boundaries clearly exclude Canada, at least in terms of the Native performers.<sup>146</sup> The next time ‘The Two Bill’s’ headed north of the border in 1910, it made only two short stops in western Canada, visiting Winnipeg and Vancouver. This marked a departure for the show, which had only toured in eastern Canada in places that had no real localized connections to western identity. Winnipeg and Vancouver, however, were located as bookends to the geographic west that Cody presented. While other shows that displayed western themes had visited Alberta and Saskatchewan in the past, Cody would not enter this area until 1914 when touring with the Sells-Floto Circus.

Like most early appraisals of Cody’s show, the newspaper features before his arrival were boosters for the show. The papers listed Cody among a long list of explorers including French voyagers, Champlain and Marquette, who had a decidedly Canadian flavour.<sup>147</sup> The journalists also praised the show for displaying the “rugged valor of the western plainsman.”<sup>148</sup> The one portion of the pre-review that seemed to separate the two nations came later, when the reporter mentioned that while local police never heard of pickpockets at the shows, the local hospitals did.<sup>149</sup> It would seem that the paper and residents of Winnipeg were aware of extra-curricular law enforcement that the American West was famous for, but did not believe it happened Canada.

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<sup>146</sup> *Hamilton Spectator*, June 28, 1909, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2671. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>147</sup> *The Winnipeg Tribune*, August 20, 1910, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2617. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>148</sup> *The Winnipeg Tribune*, August 20, 1910, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2618. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>149</sup> *The Winnipeg Tribune*, August 20, 1910, (MRL).

When the show did arrive in town another calf was born, and, sticking to tradition, it was named Winnipeg.<sup>150</sup> Of greater note, however, was the arrival of 60 boy scouts from England who were touring Canada and got to witness the program. Acting as chaperone was the Hero of the Boer War and founder and champion of the Boy Scout movement in England, Sir Baden-Powell. Interestingly enough, it had been nine years since some of the Canadian veterans that served under Baden-Powell had been hired to tour with *Wild West*.<sup>151</sup> This was not the only other connection between Cody and Baden-Powell, as Baden-Powell had created the scouting movement and Cody supported it in the United States in an effort to encourage the rejuvenation of youths thought to be negatively influenced by many of the era including Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>152</sup>

The last day the show played marked an increase in fan interaction, when a local prizefighter was asked if he would try and ride one of the wild horses, to which he agreed.<sup>153</sup> Cody also seems to have played directly to the crowd when he included a Canadian flag in the grand review followed by a British Union Jack.<sup>154</sup> This marks one of the few times when Cody inserted blatant Canadian imagery in the show while touring in Canada. After a few stops in the United States, *Wild West* travelled back north for two days in Vancouver, where it was recorded that 4000 people were sent away from the gates because the shows were sold out.<sup>155</sup> The citizens were very excited to see the show, proving that the show had appeal in the Canadian West.

While it is important to view the importance of the show from the Canadian side of the border, it is also important, when possible, to grasp the international understanding of the show

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<sup>150</sup> *The Winnipeg Tribune*, August 22, 1910, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, not numbered. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>151</sup> *The Winnipeg Tribune*, August 22, 1910, (MRL).

<sup>152</sup> Douglas Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 371.

<sup>153</sup> *The Winnipeg Tribune August 23 1910* Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2528. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>154</sup> *The Winnipeg Tribune August 23 1910*. (MRL).

<sup>155</sup> *The Vancouver World September 13 1910* Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2641. Cody Collection, (MRL).

and its characters. In 1886, the Canadian government funded an exhibition to England to highlight the country, its goods, and innovation, and in 1887, the Americans launched a similar exhibition. While both represented very similar characteristics in innovation, natural resources and other new world techniques, they did differ in one significant way. The Canadian exhibit was not followed to England by any kind of *Wild West* type show, though Cody and *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* accompanied the Americans. For the most part, Cody's show made up for an otherwise disappointing exhibition. From the beginning, funding for the exhibition was not well managed, and with no help from the government, there was the concern that it would not happen at all. Reporters found the American display to be disorganized, poorly laid out, and boring. They much preferred the Canadian one the year before, and actually told readers to pass on the American display if they had seen the Canadian one already.<sup>156</sup> The only saving grace for the American exhibit was the proximity to *Buffalo Bill's Wild West*. Since Cody's show toured England at the same time as the American exhibition, the two were tied together and gave the British a deceptive vision of the true nature of Cody's show. Had Cody toured England at the same time as the Canadian exhibition, or toured at a time when the American one was not in London, the perception of 'Wild West' might have been very different from the one that was eventually accepted. After all, Cody's show historically contained Canadians and the exhibitions were so similar that reporters told readers they did not need to see both.

The Canadian media's reception of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* was not the same from location to location, year to year, or from reporter to reporter. While the show did not refer directly to the Canadian West, while in Canada Canadians could relate to the Canadian content history of the show. The connection between the two countries was surely known, even though

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<sup>156</sup> *The Times London England*, May 10, 1887, Series VI G, Box 1, Folder 4. Cody Collection, (MRL).

the reports might not have expressed them conclusively. English-speaking Canadians easily injected themselves into the work of the show more so than French-speaking Canadians. The Canadians were very happy to cheer for the British members of the tour in the years after 1885, as during the 1885 season the Canadian reports made sure to mention Sitting Bull and his connection to Canada. In a few articles there were even mentions of the Riel Rebellion and the Native warriors who were fighting the government.

The reports linked the show's narrative to the possible future of the Canadian west and its future 'problems.' There is no doubt that the Canadian viewers were making the same links between the show's history and the activities on the Canadian western prairie. Many of the reports used unclear language when referring to the west, which was further confused by the double meaning of American, which at that time period could reference either the American as a person from the United States, or as all people from the American continents (and especially North America). Contemporary audiences may not now understand how these writers came down on the issue, but there is strong evidence that the references had to do with the people of the Americas. While Canadians might not have adopted themes in the show, we can tell they were willing to accept portions of the show as their own. And it appears likely that Cody wanted Canadians to see themselves reflected in his show; after all, the advertising campaign of this showman-with-a-Canadian-born-father expressed the similarities between scenes from American history and the battles that took place on the Canadian western prairie in 1885.

### Chapter Three

#### **“Judge Of My Surprise When I Recognized in The Stranger My Old Friend And Partner...”**

While advertisements linked Canadians to the show, no connection was more pleasing to Canadian audiences than the inclusion of Canadians as participants. In early iterations, Cody had told audiences that his show presented acts similar to sights in the Canadian west. The Canadians did not just fill spaces in the cast, but were selected both because they were Canadian and because they fit in with the show’s narrative. Cody also hired Canadians and took them on international tours; these hirings were not made merely to attract Canadians to local shows.

While we have looked at the responses seen in Canadian papers in terms of the arrival and presentation of Cody’s *Wild West*, Canadians were distinct as an audience because they were active participants in the show. *Wild West* included many nationalities over the course of the show, but they were not active participants in the western history that Cody displayed. For example, the people of England could watch their countrymen ride in the show, but could not, like Canadians, see reflections of themselves and their western history in the dramatic actions. Canadians were not just included as Rough Riders, but were members of a common “wild west,” as evidenced by their employment history with *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*.

While Cody and his company, including Sitting Bull, toured eastern Canada, the nation on the western prairie was in a state of upheaval. Louis Riel had returned to Canada from Montana and joined Gabriel Dumont’s Métis in modern day Saskatchewan. The Métis wanted the same rights that Riel helped bring to Manitoba during the Red River Rebellion. Dumont and

his people extended an offer to Riel to join them and lead them because he had experience dealing with the federal government. The return of Riel and the battles on the western Canadian prairie took place before Cody arrived. The memory was fresh, as they had been covered extensively in several newspapers. At the time, the relationship to the United States became very important to Canadians in the east.

As Barry Degenstein's careful nose-to-the-ground research has revealed, much of the information about Riel and the rebellion reported in newspapers was found to be false after the fact, and a great deal of information was not given much credence at the time. Nevertheless, it is important to note that some people may have thought false reports were creating anxiety. Furthermore, it should be noted that this anxiety was due to a perceived possibility of an international catastrophe. An early newspaper report made note that Riel's friends south of the border might join him in the territory and fight on Canadian soil.<sup>157</sup> The newspaper also reported that Riel and Sitting Bull had a previous relationship; Riel had allegedly sold pemmican to Sitting Bull and his band as they travelled south to surrender to the American government.<sup>158</sup> People in the east were very sensitive to the potential danger that a hostile west represented. Similarly, those in the south were aware of the dangers of getting involved in combat on the western plains, as newspapers had warned readers about the Métis warriors' skill. Ultimately, one paper surmised that the war would be very costly to both the police and volunteers, also stating, "in fact they would make it warm for the British regulars," meaning that the Métis would give the British soldiers pause in a battle.<sup>159</sup> The next day, the paper down-played the importance of Riel in the Red River Rebellion, crediting Ambrose Lépine instead. However, with

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<sup>157</sup> Winnipeg March 26 (1885), in *The Pursuit of Louis Riel: A Journey Back in Time 1885 Newspaper Chronicles*, ed. Barry Degenstein (Self Published: Saskatoon, 2007), 37.

<sup>158</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg March 26 1885, 40.

<sup>159</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg March 26 1885, 41.

Lépine not involved, the paper suggested that the government could resolve the issue with no bloodshed.<sup>160</sup> This new approach probably would have been preferred, as the same paper included a rumour that Riel had fifteen hundred men and six cannons at his disposal, as well as American Indians who had joined his cause.<sup>161</sup>

The growing concern over the possibility of combat increased temperatures in the east as those from Winnipeg were excited to capture Riel and hang him, or to give him a ‘Texas Trial’ as the paper put it, an execution followed by a trial.<sup>162</sup> The paper also started to print American coverage of the situation unfolding on the Canadian prairie. Due to this conflict, Canadians had also begun to worry about the possibility that the Fenians might become involved in the conflict. Not only would the possible help of the Fenians make it far harder for Canadians to contain the conflict, but failure to do so would jeopardize the strength of the commonwealth. Or, in a worst-case scenario, Fenian involvement might give the Americans an excuse to annex the western Canadian prairie. The threat of Fenian involvement became such an issue for Canadians and of interest to Americans that it prompted interviews with Jeremiah O’Donovan, the leader of the Fenians. He was asked if he had had a hand in the rebellion, to which he responded, “Ay! Two hands.”<sup>163</sup> The implied danger that the Fenians could bring to bear, even though it was not very probable, reminded Canadians and Americans that the two countries were separated by an invisible line that was hardly monitored.

The dangers of the unpatrolled border were at the forefront of peoples’ minds. A Winnipeg paper reported that ‘American-looking’ men dressed as cowboys were wandering the streets looking for work as scouts. The same paper went on to state that the men would probably

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<sup>160</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, March 27, 1885, 43.

<sup>161</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, March 27, 1885, 43.

<sup>162</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, March 28, 1885, 56-7, and 61.

<sup>163</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, March 30, 1885, 69.

find work in the coming fight.<sup>164</sup> What counted for ‘American-looking’ is unclear, as the article never explained. Nevertheless, the article gave the impression that in the coming fight, Americans would be needed to help the volunteers and police. Canadians in the past had served as their own scouts, making it odd that both these men would be needed regardless of how they looked. While the Canadians might not have needed ‘American-looking’ scouts, the Canadian Militia did accept help from the Americans in the form of a Gatling gun and cannon, both of which were moved west.<sup>165</sup> The Canadian government also sent Ambrose Lépine’s trial lawyer from the Red River Rebellion to talk with Riel.<sup>166</sup> The next day, it was discovered that Riel was not in possession of a cannon, but he remained adamant that men from Montana were coming to help him.<sup>167</sup> Riel had enjoyed the power that came from the threat of weapons and aid to match that of the Canadians.

The growing fear of American involvement led Washington to put all forts on alert and enforce strict neutrality by stopping any armed group from crossing the border in either direction.<sup>168</sup> Still, the pressure was on to resolve the conflict in a timely manner, so a call was made for Riel to be stopped as soon as possible in order to limit the possibility of Fenian involvement.<sup>169</sup> According to the Canadian papers, the Métis were dead-shots and that the Native population was angry, and, as the paper put it, “for good reason.”<sup>170</sup> This perspective stands in stark contrast to the discussion that Cody and the reporter, from above, had in Montreal, where Cody was led to believe the Native peoples had nothing to be angry about.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, March 30, 1885, 69.

<sup>165</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, March 31, 1885, 87.

<sup>166</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, March 31, 1885, 90.

<sup>167</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 1, 1885, 95.

<sup>168</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 1, 1885, 98.

<sup>169</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 1, 1885, 106.

<sup>170</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg April 1 1885, 98.

<sup>171</sup> *The Montreal Herald + Daily Commercial Gazette, August 17, 1885*, Ms 6, Box 3, Folder 28, # 2506 Cody Collection, McCracken Research Library (MRL), Buffalo Bill Centre of the West, Cody Wyoming.

The same reasons that implied the Native peoples in the United States were dangerous opponents were cited by Canadian papers; knowing their landscape and having the will to fight to protect their people made them dangerous.<sup>172</sup> The newspaper also continued to make note of Ambrose Lépine as leader of the Red River Rebellion, and continually mentioned his commuted execution and the possible implication it had on the 1885 trouble in the West.<sup>173</sup> Although Lépine had nothing to do with the 1885 rebellion, publishing his name in the newspaper probably added to his notoriety and eventual hiring for the 1889 touring season in France.

The North West Rebellion also received attention from American newspapers, which in some cases were reprinted in Canada. In one interesting example, the typical historical observations were reversed when a Chicago paper made note of a growing “tempest in a little pot of cold tea in that section of the northwest,” while, “the peaceful American,” waited and watched.<sup>174</sup> The reprinted article mentioned the defeat of “forty loyal and true policemen,” which gives us an idea of who the paper sided with.<sup>175</sup> The Canadians, however, did receive good news in the article and measures were taken in the United States to protect against any attempt by Fenians to move north into Canada.<sup>176</sup>

Misinformation continued to characterize the journalism in the Canadian papers as a roster of Riel supporters expanded with no evidence of their involvement. The tone of reports, too, became darker; for example, there were reports that the Métis planned to annihilate the government’s troops en-masse, if given the chance.<sup>177</sup> There were also conflicting reports on the stockpiled arms at Riel’s disposal, with some teamsters claiming that weapons had been coming

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<sup>172</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 1, 1885, 99.

<sup>173</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 1, 1885, 100.

<sup>174</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 2, 1885, 111.

<sup>175</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 2, 1885, 111.

<sup>176</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 2, 1885, 114.

<sup>177</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 3, 1885, 114.

into Canada from the United States since July of the previous year.<sup>178</sup> Canadians were transfixed with the thought that the United States might aid the rebels in the territory, and with good reason. A report emerged from Chicago that the 'Irish Circle' would be sending money, men, and a Gatling gun of their own.<sup>179</sup> Other Irish groups also claimed to be sending aid; in one paper, it was reported that five members of a group would head north disguised as railway workers with pistols to protect themselves against police interference.<sup>180</sup> At this point, the Irish groups were actively condoning an invasion of Canada and the murder of Canadian police officers. In the following days, hopes might have been higher that the Fenians would not involve themselves because a published interview with the head of the New York chapter was re-published in Winnipeg. The interview let readers know that the New York chapter had no intention of becoming involved citing probable American retaliation. Furthermore, the leader questioned what benefit would be gained fighting "in the wilds of the Northwest." He thought he would save the money and use it to bomb London instead.<sup>181</sup>

The American government was clearly very interested in the outcome of the Northwest Rebellion. If the conflict was allowed to escalate and, perhaps, spiral out of control, the fear was that the Natives south of the border would either join in or start a rebellion of their own. The Northwest Rebellion, it was believed, could become a catalyst for a western uprising the likes of which had never been seen.<sup>182</sup> The connection did not end there as T.T. Quinn, the Indian agent at Frog Lake, was killed in the 1885, maybe unsurprisingly, Quinn's parents were killed in the Minnesota Massacres in the United States.<sup>183</sup> No matter which side of the border the Quinn

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<sup>178</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 4, 1885, 134.

<sup>179</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 6, 1885, 146.

<sup>180</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 6, 1885, 146.

<sup>181</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 8, 1885, 165.

<sup>182</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 9, 1885, 173.

<sup>183</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 10, 1885, 178.

family were on, it seemed they were destined to be haunted by violence. Quinn had actually come north with Sitting Bull, been hired as an interpreter, and remained behind as an Indian agent at Frog Lake.<sup>184</sup> This case highlights the fluid nature of life on the western borderlands.

The close proximity between the two countries, coupled with the open border and the shared history, increased tension along the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel. Métis people in the United States who had left Canada after the Manitoba conflict naturally expressed sympathy for their former leader Riel and were rumoured to have crossed the border in small groups to head west, looting as they went.<sup>185</sup> The Métis who fled south were joined by some Natives that formed a Canadian base in the United States, just as American Natives, like Quinn, were living in Canada. The shifting demographic muddied an already unclear picture of ‘nationalism’ on the western prairie, suggesting the conflict was much more than a ‘Canadian’ issue. Furthering this fact was that many of the scouts who joined the government forces were from Montana.<sup>186</sup> Later in the conflict, the Canadian/American connection became apparent. Reports emerged that informed readers that two Canadian constables were injured, one Canadian-born and the other American. The American was captured while the Canadian escaped and was expected to heal fully.<sup>187</sup> Additionally, a 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry sabre was reportedly found with Chief White Cap, further linking the countries together.<sup>188</sup> While the border was to be a limiting line of demarcation for national interests and peoples, it was far from it, as peoples, cultures, and history had an almost unfettered ability to cross and re-cross.

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<sup>184</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 10, 1885, 178.

<sup>185</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 11, 1885, 194.

<sup>186</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 15, 1885, 211.

<sup>187</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, May 15, 1885, 397.

<sup>188</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, May 15, 1885, 403.

The coming conflict also raised questions about Riel's nationality. A newspaper in Buffalo claimed that as a political offender, Riel could once again seek asylum in the United States. This argument prompted a paper from Toronto to claim that Riel was, in fact, American due to his long time residency in the United States. By this logic, since Riel was American, he was in direct violation of American law in his international transgressions in Canada and would then be punished by the Americans.<sup>189</sup> The Americans, not wanting another war on the western prairie, emphatically called for the enforcement of neutrality and cut off of any person attempting to cross the border into Canada. In response, U.S. General Alfred Terry increased the presence of the military on the border to deter any and all attempting to cross into Canada.<sup>190</sup>

Reports from eastern Canada also began to resemble the coverage of Cody's show later in 1885. The *Church Guardian*, a paper out of Halifax, contended that the rebellion was a last gasp by the Métis and Natives to resist the 'civilizing tide of Anglo-Saxons.'<sup>191</sup> The paper went on to say that the Natives were alarmed by the disappearing bison and, with Canadian supremacy secured, a general revolt was the quickest way to get food from the government.<sup>192</sup> On the other side of the coin, Canadians were contrasted with the Americans. For the upcoming conflict, the Alberta Rifles were outfitted with new gear including Winchester rifles, Montana broadcloth suits, sombreros, Mexican saddles, and Indian ponies. The garb gave them, as the paper put it, "a thoroughly western appearance."<sup>193</sup> It seems odd that the Alberta Rifles were not already seen as westerners being from Alberta, but the idea of 'western-ness' was so wrapped up in the representation created in the United States that the western unit needed the trappings of the American cowboy to appear 'western.' Where the language used to describe the ending era of

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<sup>189</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 18, 1885, 232.

<sup>190</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 24, 1885, 272.

<sup>191</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 28, 1885, 299.

<sup>192</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 28, 1885, 299.

<sup>193</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, April 29, 1885, 306.

Native peoples could have been torn from the pages of a *Wild West* press package, the dress of the Alberta rifles was coloured by the influence of Cody's western presentation.

The newspapers began to take a rather negative view of the Native peoples involved with the rebellion, suggesting that they should disappear like the bison. This theme, while presented as a loss of a unique people, was often used in *Wild West* as a reason to see the show. The paper told readers that the Natives had chosen to fight rather than to be fed, which made it acceptable for them to be punished until they were no longer able to rise up to threaten Canada.<sup>194</sup>

According to the paper, there was also a drive among the troops to kill Dumont, who was understood to be the most dangerous of the rebels and the most efficient killer at the Battle of Duck Lake. His legend grew as Dumont was credited with executing two men, whom no one could remember the names of.<sup>195</sup>

While this kind of violence was often seen as an American western problem, it was present on the Canadian plains as well. But, despite the discourse in the east presenting a rather violent west, there were elements that were understood to be more 'Canadian' in nature. For example, Big Bear sent a letter to Sgt. J.A. Martin, and the North West Mounted Police stationed in Fort Pitt asked the military to leave under threat of being killed, an act Big Bear felt uncomfortable with as he liked Martin very much.<sup>196</sup> This kind of restrained rebellion, or polite Canadian, fits the stereotype of a more subdued and peaceful Canadian west. Nevertheless, eastern papers called for the arrest and execution of the rebels. The Toronto papers claimed that without a doubt, Riel was an American and should be tried in military courts and executed when

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<sup>194</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, May 13, 1885, 388.

<sup>195</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, May 16, 1885, 413.

<sup>196</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, May 18, 1885, 423.

he was found guilty.<sup>197</sup> Other rebels had turned themselves in to the Canadian troops, but Dumont, after lingering in the wild, headed south and turned himself in to the Americans. Dumont was later released after president Garfield's Secretary of War, William Endicott, said they had no reason to hold him.<sup>198</sup> However, Dumont could have been held for extradition for murder, and the papers called for the government to seek his return to Canada. Eastern Canadians went so far as to blame the United States, namely Montana, for its recent hardships, stating that not only had Montana supplied Riel, who they blamed for the conflict, but also that the United States would not turn Dumont over to them for a trial and punishment.<sup>199</sup> While the Canadians were angry with the way the Americans handled their fugitives, the Americans were rather impressed with the fighting men that came out of Winnipeg, crediting the volunteer forces' determination and effectiveness to their unshakeable patriotism, a trait not often spoken of when considering the Canadian West.<sup>200</sup>

Soon after the Riel Rebellion, Americans worried about the possibility of fighting on their own western plains. The problem was that pro-rebellion forces were forced out of Canada into the United States in what was thought to be an agitated condition. Further complicating the situation was a larger force of Mounted Police sent west to guard the border, effectively closing a historical pressure release for American conflicts. Canadians also paid attention to the growing troubles south of the border, as there was news that if the Natives in the south had their own versions of Riel and Dumont, the conflict could last months.<sup>201</sup> Little Poplar, a supporter of the rebellion, was killed in Montana by a 'half-breed' in reported self-defence. Whether or not the Métis was Canadian or formerly Canadian is not recorded but the possibility is strong that he

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<sup>197</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, May 21, 1885, 449.

<sup>198</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, May 30, 1885, 516.

<sup>199</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, June 5, 1885, 537.

<sup>200</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, June 15, 1885, 566.

<sup>201</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Winnipeg, July 24, 1885, 583.

may have been counted among the displaced Métis of the 1870 rebellion.<sup>202</sup> The death of Little Poplar heightened tensions in the United States, and the belief that fighting south of the Canadian border could last months is interesting to contemplate with respect to the standard idea of western identity. With the 1885 Rebellion lasting only about a month and a half, the Canadian papers gave themselves the ‘benefit’ of being better western soldiers, despite the fact that Americans had far more experience fighting Natives on their frontier. Additionally, in atypical Canadian style, the residents of Saskatoon refused to return the guns given to them for their protection during the rebellion.<sup>203</sup>

Ironically enough, after the fighting had stopped, there was interest in using the story of the rebellion for entertainment. It was reported that the 1885 rebellion would be adapted into a stage show titled *Louis Riel*, which would begin before the end of 1885.<sup>204</sup> The adaptation of the story of the North West Rebellion and Louis Riel might have acted much like Cody’s original stage show, where he learned his trade and came up with the idea of his *Wild West*. While the play based on the rebellion was being written, Cody sent chief press agent and general manager, John ‘Major’ Burke, of *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* to seek out and hire Gabriel Dumont. In the original press coverage it was reported that Cody sought Dumont to be featured in a battle of Batoche.<sup>205</sup> As we know, the papers’ account was exaggerated, as Dumont was only ever employed to ride in the opening parade and acted more as a living piece of history than as an actor in his own story, like Cody or other performers. However, we can see that Cody was interested in the story and celebrity that Dumont offered to his show, especially coming after the previous year’s success in Canada with Sitting Bull, another opposition military leader. If the

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<sup>202</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Battleford, August 16, 1886, 708.

<sup>203</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Qu’appelle Vidette, November 26, 1885, 694.

<sup>204</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Qu’appelle Vidette, November 26, 1885, 695.

<sup>205</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Qu’appelle Vidette, August 13, 1885, 673.

play had been created, Cody might have had a serious contender to his show that originated in Canada.

Dumont was hired and took part in the 1886 season with his first show in Philadelphia in the latter half of the season. Dumont's time with the show was brief, but he was listed second to Cody on the show program, beating out other famous participants like Annie Oakley and the 'cowboy king' Buck Taylor. Dumont was billed as The Exiled Chieftain of the Riel Rebellion, and received a half page write-up in the program.<sup>206</sup> The biography in the program is not altogether accurate, but it does pass along the narrative that Cody and company would have wanted readers to know. After providing a brief background on Dumont, his ancestry and previous careers, the write-up switched to Dumont's history with Louis Riel and the 1870 rebellion where the author described Dumont as a major supporter of Riel.<sup>207</sup> When the biography got to the 1885 rebellion, it actually decreased Dumont's importance by saying that Riel sought out Dumont as an ally, when in fact it was Dumont who travelled to Montana to ask for Riel's assistance. The biography also informed readers of Dumont's war background and reminded them that he had the scars of his enemies as proof of his fighting pedigree.<sup>208</sup> The writer, while reminding readers that he was a part of the rebellion, did state Dumont's conviction to sacrifice everything to fight the injustice he saw befalling his people.

With some conjecture, Cody's press book stated that Dumont was a political outlaw, though Cody believed that in time, a historian would find Dumont to be, "sans peur et sans reproche."<sup>209</sup> The press book also stated that after escaping Middleton's forces that knew of his

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<sup>206</sup> 1886 Program, Cody Collection (MRL).

<sup>207</sup> 1886 Program, (MRL).

<sup>208</sup> 1886 Program, (MRL).

<sup>209</sup> 1886 Program, (MRL).

battlefield skills, Dumont was “apprehended” by the United States government.<sup>210</sup> Dumont, in reality, turned himself in to the U.S. authorities and was not captured. This mistake on the show’s part was perhaps an attempt to give credit to the United States forces for a task the Canadians could not complete. Although the book informed readers that Dumont was exiled, he had the pleasure of knowing that nearly all the provisions that he fought for were enforced. Additionally, his cohort, Pound-maker, was pardoned, and then Cody’s press book asked how long it would take until Parliament would pardon Dumont by special order and return him to his prominent position in the northwest.<sup>211</sup> Cody’s impression was right, and Dumont was invited to come back to Canada, something he did after waiting what he viewed as an appropriate length of time, ensuring that it was not a trap to get him to return to face a trial.

Dumont’s time with the show was short, only lasting the rest of the year of 1886. Don Russell, a respected man and one of the first Cody biographers, included Dumont not only in the winter season of 1886 at Madison Square Garden, but also a record of him being involved with the 1889 French tour. However, this fact is unverified, and since his primary focus was Cody, it is possible that he simply made mistakes and confused other members of the troupe. Russell seems to have had a difficult time classifying Dumont in his notes, and while he was correct in his listing of Dumont as a star, in most of his notes he also listed Dumont with the cowboys, the white performers, the Native performers, and under the heading, “some of the men with Buffalo Bill’s show.”<sup>212</sup> While Russell often listed Métis people as mixed-bloods, he just as often listed Dumont as one or the other and never listed him as either a mixed-blood or Métis. Many of Russell’s notes and scraps of paper, and from time to time even napkins, have Dumont listed many times. The problem of identification might stem from the United States lacking a

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<sup>210</sup> 1886 Program, (MRL).

<sup>211</sup> 1886 Program, (MRL).

<sup>212</sup>Scrap of Paper #1 Ms 62 S 1G, Box 2, Folder 3, and B2 F11, B2 F12, B2 F14. Don Russell Collection, (MRL).

designation for Métis, since Dumont was listed as a main draw and the only Métis to earn this prominence in the program.

Russell credited Dumont as a touring performer for far more years than he actually worked. Throughout his notes, Russell listed Dumont not only in different racial categories but also spanning from the years 1886-1889. This timeframe would mean that Dumont travelled to England and France, which he did not. While Russell did have Dumont listed from 1886-1889, he was never sure about those records; some were written with shorter dates, while others had later dates listed in both pencil and pen. The accurate notes often gave a brief description of Dumont after his name, typically “of Riel” or “Exiled Chief of Riel Rebellion” or “leader in Canada’s Riel Rebellion,” so we know that Russell was familiar with portions of Dumont’s past at certain points during his research.<sup>213</sup> However, as Cody was Russell’s primary interest, many of the other people in the show were left out of the book he produced and little attention was paid to other performers. Dumont’s tenure with the show lasted only one year, after which he returned to Canada and lived out his days in peace with his daughter and her family.

The next time Canadian performers included were in 1889 during the tour of France. In an effort to present a decidedly French aspect to the show, Cody hired both Ambroise Lépine and Maxime Goulet. Both men had participated in the Manitoba rebellion of 1870 that saw Riel leave Canada. For his role in the rebellion Lépine was sentenced to death, but his sentence was commuted. Goulet would eventually serve the government of Manitoba as a member of assembly and as the agriculture minister. Both men were famous in their own right, and were prime examples of Métis Canadians. Like Dumont before them, they did little performing in the

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<sup>213</sup> Scrap of Paper #2 Ms 62 S 1G, Box 2, Folder 12, B2 F14. Don Russell Collection, (MRL).

show but were part of both Métis and Canadian history.<sup>214</sup> Because the Métis had a strong French fur trading background, the display of these French and Native peoples gave French spectators a way to see themselves in the show, or at least connect to their far-flung cultural heritage. The 1889 show also featured a Red River Cart, a uniquely Canadian and Métis hand pulled cart featuring two large wheels and pulling arms out the front. The carts were numerous across the prairie, where they were used to move equipment and buffalo meat during the massive Métis buffalo hunts. The cart was advertised as being pulled by a “French Half-breed in a sky-blue jacket and jaunty beaded cap.”<sup>215</sup> This portion of the show not only presented Canadian history, but a Canadian history with a Francophone edge to it. It was important for the show to present a French common history to the story of the ‘west,’ and the easiest and most direct way was to present it with a Canadian element.

Two years previously, when *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* was in England, there was no need to play up a shared history by using Canada. The British could see their shared history with America through the colonies and revolution. However, in France, it was far easier to use the French/Canada shared past to let the people of France make a connection with Cody's show. The significance of this is that by including French-Canadians, Cody once again proved that he saw the people north of the border as part of his grand narrative, at least before the format change of 1893. The inclusion of the Métis and Red River Cart might have been a ploy to entice French citizens into viewing the show for French historical fingerprints, but their inclusion also displays the fluidity of Cody's idea of the west and his willingness to include both countries.

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<sup>214</sup> William Evans Deahl Jr., “A History of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show 1883-1913,” Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois University (1974), 81.

Dumont is once again listed in this work as being included in the 1889 show; though this is probably due to the incorrect Russell notes and not a representation of further research.

<sup>215</sup> Deahl Jr., “A History of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show 1883-1913,” 81.

In addition, the 1889 program stands out for its inclusion of what is described as an Eskimo and his dog sled. While Inuit peoples lived in both the American and Canadian north, there was one year where Canadian acts were included. The next time Canadian participants were hired was after the 1893 format change to *Congress of the Rough Riders of the World*, which was more than a nod to the neighbours to the north, in the light of the Canadian role in international conflict and their unique reputation around the globe.

In 1901, in an effort to once again highlight the international character of horsemanship and warfare, Cody included a group of Canadian Mounted Rifles as well as a group of the Strathcona Horse. Whereas the Canadian Mounted Rifles were a non-descript military unit that served in the second Boer War in South Africa, the Strathcona Horse had gained special recognition in the Boer War and drew many of its fighting men from the west with the great majority being employed as cowboys in western Canada. The Strathcona also attracted many former North West Mounted Police, who, due to their heritage in the West, were known as excellent scouts and trackers. The history of the Mounted Police that joined the Strathcona Horse noted in the 1901 program,<sup>216</sup> and the inclusion of the Strathcona Horse, also served as a hiring feature that functioned in a ‘two for one’ capacity. In a descriptive section in the program written by ‘Major’ John Burke, he listed the North West Mounted Police as a different group entirely, leading readers to believe that there were not only two military units, but also a group of Mounted Police, “the pride of the Canadian frontier.”<sup>217</sup> The Canadian troops in Africa also took to wearing western attire during the war, notably Stetson hats, which were the envy of the British troops who would eventually request the broad-brimmed hats for themselves. Stetson was also the brand of hat Cody wore, and their advertisements were included in the shows programs.

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<sup>216</sup> 1901 Program. Cody Collection, (MRL).

<sup>217</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL)

The inclusion of the Boer War veterans kept *Wild West* up-to-date on international events, as well as the prototypical western or Rough Rider heritage that the show highlighted. As time wore on, *Wild West* also became an exercise in showcasing the strength of European dominance displayed in many of the battle sequences like The Battle of San Juan Hill or the re-creation of the Boxer Rebellion in China. The Boer veterans also gave Cody an opportunity to make connections between his show and Sir Baden-Powell, the defender of Mafeking, a famous battle, and founder of the Boy Scout movement in Great Britain. It should be noted that Cody hosted a group of boy scouts and Baden-Powell in Winnipeg for one of his shows. The description of the Canadian soldiers in Cody's program correctly identified the Strathcona Horse as defenders of Mafeking, the widely known battle.<sup>218</sup> The changes to the format gave Cody opportunities to promote his personal beliefs and those that were circulating in the era. Military preparedness and the promotion of a healthy active lifestyle were two of Cody's championed causes.

Cody regarded his ability to associate his program with Baden-Powell positively, as both he and Theodore Roosevelt agreed with the strengthening of young males in their country and the scouting movement as a means to educate and elevate young boys. Just as audiences marvelled at the size of some of the *Wild West* performers, namely Buck Taylor "the Cowboy King" at well over six feet, the Canadian soldiers in South Africa were also impressive in stature. The idea that men of the New World were of an exceptional physical character persisted into the First World War, where British soldiers waited for the lumberjacks and cowboys from Canada to show up to help fight the Germans. The pressure for the west to create a healthy breed of young people to one day take over the country led Cody to believe that the Canadian soldiers

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<sup>218</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

exemplified the physical strength and strength of character that came from the west. Therefore, the Canadian west was on par with that of the United States, in Cody's mind.

In an attempt to recreate the implied tension that the show had had for years by featuring both Native and Cavalry veterans, Cody also hired a commando of Transvaal Boers for his 1901 season. Of course, the Boers were placed on the opposite side of the Canadians and Cody made sure to tell audiences that they had been enemies in the past. To add further tension, Cody hired many "wounded and invalided veterans" from the Boer side, making them a group worthy of sympathy.<sup>219</sup> The hiring of both the Canadians and the Boer soldiers not only created the illusion of tension within the show, but also continued Cody's practice of presenting a living history in the *Wild West*. As an article stated, they were "enemies in time of war, friends under the banner of peace."<sup>220</sup> This kind of peace was seen throughout the show, but the best example came in 1885 during the Canadian tour dates when the famous 'Foes in '76, Friends in '85' (see figure three<sup>iii</sup>) photography was taken in Montreal.

The Canadian 'actors' in *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* never got an opportunity to tour in their own country and highlight their role in the 'wild west,' but they did tour internationally to their 'ancestral' homeland of France. The historically French performers were brought on board with Cody to highlight the involvement of France in the growing nation of Canada. The other Canadian acts toured only the United States, though they stopped in locations quite close to their homeland. Unfortunately, there is no record of the Canadians watching their own countrymen's involvement. However, one article covering the inclusion of the Canadian troops mirrors that of Dumont's write up in the 1886 program. During the 1901 tour, the show produced a full-page article highlighting the heroism of the Canadian men and the continental connection between

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<sup>219</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

<sup>220</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

Canada and the United States. From the beginning of the article, the un-credited writer connects Canada and the United States with a shared identity, calling Canada “Our Continental Cousin,” and adding that they had proven themselves equestrian masters, impressing Europeans and equalling American horsemanship.<sup>221</sup> The article also blurs the line between the two countries stating, “in Continental connection, being with us, beside us and of us, as it were, not only in geographic proximity but in domestic, commercial and linguistic similarity – so close as to almost obliterate the imaginary political line of divergence [...] while not a political unit, still one Continental family – essentially one people.”<sup>222</sup> The article also praises the Canadians fighting in South Africa and credits their success to the “American” conditions that exist in Canada: open space, weather, and the frontiersmanship that laid dormant in the Canadian but were ready for the fighting in South Africa.<sup>223</sup> The program saw the Canadian involvement in the Boer War as a debut for the Canadian military on an international scale.<sup>224</sup>

The article continues to strengthen the connection between Canada and the United States, grouping them together in their martial history as the “American Canadian contingent.”<sup>225</sup> Cody’s publicists aided the fearsome tradition of the Strathcona Horse by stating that where the Boers would fight the British Regulars tooth-and-nail, they quickly learned to give the Canadian soldiers a wide berth and avoid fighting whenever possible.<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, Cody’s people credited the knowledge and skill of the Canadian fighting to their practice on the frontier fighting Native peoples, a history that he and his American brothers could claim.<sup>227</sup> While most of the printed work was done by an agent with the show, who used a quotation to close the article

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<sup>221</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

<sup>222</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

<sup>223</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

<sup>224</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

<sup>225</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

<sup>226</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

<sup>227</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

reprinted from the *Ottawa Citizen* and taken from Lieutenant Edward Morrison: “Here in this young northern country, quite without premeditation or obvious object, we have bred up and are breeding up, soldier material equal to the best the world has ever seen.”<sup>228</sup> Cody would have also liked to apply this sentiment to his and his American performers’ own country, an idea that he help to disseminate through his show.

As we have seen, Canadians were not just passive observers to the show. Rather, through their shared history and inclusion, Canadians were depicted as examples of important players in ‘American’ history. While a third of their involvement was after the format change in 1893 to include the *Rough Riders of the World*, they were included in large parts of the pre-restructured format. Additionally, when the Canadians were included in the 1901 dates, they were included as ‘continental cousins,’ having shared similar experiences on the western plains. Cody did include the Boer War combatants as a ‘from the headlines’ piece of his ensemble, but they were also so much more to him and his publicity team; they were brothers of one history and shared an identity that audiences could easily understand, a part of *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*.

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<sup>228</sup> 1901 Program. (MRL).

## Conclusion

**“...And Whomsoever God And Buffalo Bill Have Joined Together Let No Man Put Asunder.”**

From its very foundation, *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* had strong ties to Canada. By its third year (1885), the show had toured Canada where it saw great success. In its fourth season (1886), *Wild West* went one step further and attached itself to a major Canadian news story and prominently featured a Canadian rebel. The trend of including Canada is significant because the years 1885 and 1886 secured the future success of the show while using topical Canadian content. Furthermore, the trip to Canada demonstrated the idea that the show could succeed outside of the United States. By hiring Gabriel Dumont, a man famous on both sides of the border for fighting the Canadian government, Cody gave credence to the western Canadian history his show presented. Dumont's inclusion in the show continued the previous years' draw of Sitting Bull, as both were 'honest to goodness rebels' being employed by the show. *Wild West* invited viewers to see some of the most dangerous men of the time in a safe and entertaining format. In doing so, it created an image of the west for its viewers that emphasized the 'sameness' of the American and Canadian western experiences and landscape. The west as portrayed in Cody's shows minimized national differences and played up the idea that Americans and Canadians were, if not exactly the same, at least profoundly similar.

By 1889, when the show toured France, Cody courted French interest by hiring Canadians to highlight France's role in the New World. French Métis were once again fixtures of Canadian western history and a showcase of the peoples of the New World. Not only did Cody hire Ambroise Lépine and Maxime Goulet who were men of reputation in the Canadian

West, he also highlighted the Métis that hunted bison on the plain and their dress and customs. Cody continued his hiring for the 1889 season with the inclusion of an Inuit man and a dog sledge, a sight that could have been seen in either Canada or the United States, but possibly more associated in audiences' minds with Canada and its cold winters.

The final advertised appearance of Canadian content was the 1901 season, which toured the United States. The 1901 season featured both Canadian Mounted Rifles and Strathcona Horse, fresh from the battlefields of South Africa. Many of the men in these units were drawn from the Canadian west for their riding skills, particularly from the North West Mounted Police as well as local ranches where they worked as cowboys. The program that featured the fighting Canadians placed them on equal footing with the American riders, and above most other countries that shared the performance ring with Cody. The inclusion and kind words that were shared with regard to the Canadian soldiers firmly placed them within *The Rough Rider of the World*, yet the other acts before the format change had linked the two countries at a far more fundamental level. Canadians were a part of the show Cody had created, and as with his own personal and familial ties to the northern Dominion, he came to regard all Canadians as Americas' 'continental cousins.'

While there were only three years that made note of the Canadian participants, it cannot be discounted that many of the cowboys might have been Canadians, or at the very least spent time in Canada while perfecting their trade. Unfortunately, at this time not enough is known about the vast majority of the show's performers. While there are many sources that deal with the health and well-being of the Native participants, as it was of great interest to the American federal government, there was little interest in the history or well-being of the 'white' performers. The majority of this information stems from the government and other parties'

interest. For example, the Friends of the Indians were interested in pacifying and ‘civilizing’ the Native population. Cowboys were seen as being civilized and the well-being of performers in the show that came from other nationalities were less important to the federal government or the average American citizen. Due to the disinterest, little is known about many of the performers and support staff that helped run the massive undertaking.

Yet, many of the hallmark attractions of Cody’s show that had the world abuzz were fully part of western Canadian life, or could be found in Canada. For example, cowboys worked ranges in western Canada, and Native populations were relatively large in Canada, so frontier violence between aboriginals and settlers was not unheard of. While Cody’s show would eventually change and include all kinds of frontier histories, none was closer to the Americans than their neighbours to the north. Both nations, after all, had their foundations as British colonies, with Canada owing some of its culture to French influences, which Cody highlighted in the 1889 tour. Of all the countries that shared the *Wild West* platform with the United States, Canada had the longest, most promoted, and focused history.

Though this study of Cody’s Wild West show we have seen the close ties that existed in American and Canadian imaginations relating to a shared frontier history. Doing so gives this work a unique look at the shared history between our two countries, namely by utilizing a largely overlooked body of historical documents. Cody’s importance to the American popular culture and the development of a sense of American historical identity is well documented and unquestionable; we can now see Cody and his idea of frontier history played a role in Canadian imaginations as well.

In the 1901 program, Cody highlighted the “human mosaic,” a theory pushed forward later in Canada in 1938 by John Murray Gibbon’s book *Canadian Mosaic*, which was critical of

the theory of the American Melting Pot and its aim to assimilate, which was also highlighted and disseminated in Cody's show.<sup>229</sup> Oddly enough, the historical sentiment of the American nation is the creation of Americans by way of the 'melting pot' - the idea that immigrants left their homes around the world and traveled to America and became American.<sup>230</sup> According to this 'melting pot,' they took all the best from around the world and blended them into an American people who were better than the sum of their parts. In Canada, the same type of sentiment existed; however, instead of the 'melting pot' Canadians came to regard their country in terms of a 'cultural mosaic.' The 'cultural mosaic' champions the theme that once again, the people of the world leave their homes around the world to emigrate to Canada, but in Canada they tend to retain and share their unique cultures and also become Canadian. The format of Cody's show was a precursor to the popularity of the cultural mosaic, but the program highlighted the ideas that would be used to differentiate the countries. Although the two countries had similar ideas of assimilation, in that they would assimilate, it could be argued that Cody's show seemed to favour the Canadian model of cultural mosaic. His Rough Riders made up a patchwork of cultural horsemen that each had important differences, but they came together in a brotherhood of Rough Riders. While the riders did not speak the same language or share cultural customs, they were brought together under the historical and cultural significance of horsemanship. In some ways, they had an equestrian shorthand with each other, strengthened by a healthy pride and the drive to impress and outdo each other.

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<sup>229</sup>1901 Program. Cody Collection, McCracken Research Library (MRL), Buffalo Bill Centre of the West, Cody Wyoming.

<sup>230</sup>Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," <http://sundog.usask.ca/search~S8?/X+jackson+turner&searchscope=8&SORT=D/X+jackson+turner&searchscope=8&SORT=D&SUBKEY=+jackson+turner/1%2C153%2C153%2CB/frameset&FF=X+jackson+turner&searchscope=8&SORT=D&7%2C7%2C> (accessed November 17, 2015).

Interestingly, Cody's initial celebrity was gained through the publication of dime novels, short books similar to modern comic books. These books were not only read by young people, but were often used by new immigrants learning to read English. The dime novel, with its simple writing, plot, and pictures, was ideal for non-English readers to learn the language. The stories of rugged American heroes like Cody not only ran through the dreams of the children, but also introduced many new Americans to the written English word. These stories coloured the idea of what their new nation was, and what they could hope to become within it. Cody used the Star-Spangled Banner as an unofficial theme song, which eventually led to its adoption as the American national anthem.<sup>231</sup> The song was written during the War of 1812 between British Canadians and the Americans, the tune of which was actually borrowed from an old English drinking song.<sup>232</sup> Although Cody advanced a kind of national entertainment on the surface, with his multinational casts and borderland stories his show became much more than an advertisement for the United States.

Overall, *Wild West* had a strong undercurrent of Canadian content, one of the reasons being that Cody's family was a prime example of the fluidity of the national border. Cody's family moved to Canada in the Great Lakes region and farther west where the borders were almost non-existent. Cody could have, by today's standard, become a dual citizen because he had a Canadian father. While his baptismal story might not be accurate and he may have never been to Canada until his 1885 tour, he had a familial connection north of the border. His familial connection was so deep that he often asked his 'continental cousin' Frank for mining advice for his ill-fated mining venture in Arizona, as he believed they were not very different.

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<sup>231</sup> Thomas Anthony Freeland, "The National Entertainment: Buffalo Bill's Wild West and the Pageant of American Empire" (UMI Dissertation Services, 1999), 176.

<sup>232</sup> Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), 32.

Moreover, *Wild West* included Dumont, Lépine, Goulet, Métis peoples, and Canadian military. However, they were not the only Canadians that made a name for themselves as western peoples. While they might not have been involved in show business, many Canadians made lasting impacts on the culture of the west. William “Bat” Masterson, celebrated gunfighter, lawman, and gambler was born in Henryville, Quebec. While in the United States, Masterson made a name for himself as a marshal and as a supporter of Theodore Roosevelt and, subsequently, was given an appointment as a deputy U.S. marshal in New York City. He eventually became a newspaper writer and died at his desk in 1921. Masterson, like some of the age, became synonymous with the strength of character and the iron will that ‘tamed’ the west, when in reality he probably did more to help create the idea of it.<sup>233</sup>

Another famous Canadian in the old West was Pearl Hart, a member of a duo to commit the third last stagecoach hold-up in American history. Pearl was born in Lindsay, Ontario in 1871, and was one among the crowd at the 1893 World’s Fair in Chicago, where it is reported she visited *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* and became enamoured with the lifestyle.<sup>234</sup> This interest led Pearl to move west where she either cooked meals for miners or ran a brothel, depending on the source. When Pearl tried her hand at robbing a stagecoach with an accomplice, she was arrested, but was shown relative mercy and only spent a sixth of the time behind bars as her partner did. It is reported that in 1904, Pearl worked in *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West* under an alias.<sup>235</sup> While it is difficult to tell if the story is true or not, it is entirely possible that she worked for the troupe, though if Cody knew who she was, it is surprising she was not a featured attraction. Pearl Hart died in obscurity on an unknown date.

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<sup>233</sup> Robert K. DeArment, *Bat Masterson : The Man and The Legend* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979).

<sup>234</sup> Kimberly Matas, Arizona Daily Star Pearl Hart: Smooth Talking Card Shark Led Pearl’s Slide to Perdition October 31 2008 [azstarnet.com/news/local/pearl-hart-smooth-talking-card-shark-led-pearl-s-slide/article\\_8cc72f57-2a7d-5618-a596-1d00b74975cb.html](http://azstarnet.com/news/local/pearl-hart-smooth-talking-card-shark-led-pearl-s-slide/article_8cc72f57-2a7d-5618-a596-1d00b74975cb.html) (accessed March 15 2014).

<sup>235</sup> Matas, Arizona Daily Star Pearl Hart, (accessed March 15 2014).

Through Cody, Canadians made names for themselves in the United States. It is interesting how little attention historians have paid to the Canadian characters who made headlines across the west. Perhaps these characters were known as Americans and not Canadians. Canadians and the Canadian West offered the kind of ‘excitement’ that American and international audiences hungered for. However, the Canadian characters were not often given their moment in the sun like the colourful characters of the United States. This is not to say that there were no colourful Canadian characters as well. The first photographs taken under fire during wartime were taken by a Canadian in Canada. Capt. James Peters, an amateur photographer, took a few photos of Métis warriors as they fired upon him in 1885. Peters’ photos were circulated in the east, the most famous being ‘Riel in prison.’ Even when Peters captured his photos, journalists knew that the photos were of historical interest, being that they were the first of their kind.<sup>236</sup> Peters caught real wartime photographs, photos that showed what an engagement actually looked like on the western frontier, a feat the Cody tried to breathe life into everyday his performers rode in the arena. Cody would later try and recreate his scenes with his motion picture company, a venture that never paid off. Peters captured the real ‘wild west’ in brief flashes and the danger that lurked there. The Canadian and American western histories and ideas of the west were so close that they were almost mirrors and seemed to be joining together. While certain institutions and traditions continued to emphasise and reinforce the political, cultural, and economic gulfs between Canada and the United States, Cody’s show transcended these gulfs, as to them, the western similarities transcended political differences. While some Canadians chose to emphasize the differences, and indeed the tension between the two countries was palpable after years of the border problems, Cody chose to imagine a

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<sup>236</sup> Barry J. Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel: A Journey Back in Time 1885 Newspaper Chronicles* (Self Published: Saskatoon, 2007) Winnipeg May 5 1885, 327.

multinational west with strong ties to a borderland history, and he actively linked the two countries, western histories and identities. However, the division persisted and even Cody's genre defining program could not hold back a tide of popular culture that would force the nations apart.

An 1890 newspaper article illustrates the systemic lack of understanding about the west. After American newspapers attacked Canada for failing in its Indian policy by letting Cree people enter Montana, Canadians fired back with their own criticisms of American policy. These rebuttals focused on the history of American policy, and the writer stated that until recently, the American government had found it easier to kill its Native people than feed them.<sup>237</sup> Furthermore, the Canadians stated that while the Americans had many outbreaks of war with their Native peoples, Canada had very few. The ones that existed were due to the troublemaker Riel, and were not the by-product of poor Indian policies.<sup>238</sup> The Canadian paper then compared the contemporary crossing of the Cree with Sitting Bull's previous crossing following the Battle of Little Bighorn. According to the paper Canada had no ability to recall their Native people, just as the Americans could not force Sitting Bull to return to the United States. Canada would also not institute a "dead line" policy like the Americans had. The 'dead line' policy simply stated that if you crossed the line, or the border, you were crossing with the possibility of death, a policy that Canadian government and police authorities did not seek to replicate. Further connecting Sitting Bull to the contemporary problem, the Canadian paper stated that if Canada was able to convince Sitting Bull to trek south of the line, the Americans should have done the same.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Macleod August 7 1890, 708.

<sup>238</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Macleod August 7 1890, 708.

<sup>239</sup> Degenstein, *The Pursuit of Louis Riel*, Macleod August 7 1890, 708.

Problems like this one moved Canadian and American western experiences further apart than anyone could have imagined. The gulf between the two nations grew so deep and ignorance between the two so strong that it came to a comically ironic head later in 1958. Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, in an effort to celebrate Canadians while still seeking commonalities between the two countries, spoke of Gabriel Dumont (a personal hero) as the greatest frontiersman and Indian fighter.<sup>240</sup> Diefenbaker next even mentioned Cody by name, saying that for every buffalo Cody killed, Dumont would have killed a half dozen. And the Prime Minister then boasted of Dumont having killed eleven policemen in a single battle.<sup>241</sup> The article also tells the story of Dumont's scalp wound that permanently parted his hair, just like Cody's scalp wound.

Cody supporters, in 1958, seemingly ignorant of the shared history Cody had tried to create, quickly came to Buffalo Bill's defence. As the paper notes, "What does this guy think he's talking about!"<sup>242</sup> Not only was Cody the best hunter, "he was the greatest buffalo hunter and pioneer on this continent, and don't tell me any Canadian half-breed was better!" the writer cried.<sup>243</sup> The writer and readers were adamant that Cody was the best hunter, pioneer, and Indian fighter in known history. The Chicagoans were incensed, stating that no one had even "heard of this guy, Dumont, anyways?"<sup>244</sup>

However, Buffalo Bill had certainly heard of Gabriel Dumont and went out of his way to hire the man for his show. In 1885, Dumont's name was splashed across newspapers in both Canada and the United States. Cody realised the high-profile hiring of Dumont would draw crowds, so he promoted Dumont to top billing in the programs for the 1886 season. Dumont's

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<sup>240</sup> *The Chicago American*, June 26, 1958, Ms 62, Series ID, Box 1, Folder 5. Cody Collection. (MRL).

<sup>241</sup> *The Chicago American*, June 26, 1958. (MRL).

<sup>242</sup> *The Chicago American*, June 26, 1958. (MRL).

<sup>243</sup> *The Chicago American*, June 26, 1958. (MRL).

<sup>244</sup> *The Chicago American*, June 26, 1958. (MRL).

name was second to only Cody's in the 1886 season, but Dumont did not have a taste for show business (much like Sitting Bull), and he left after one season. Four days after the initial newspaper articles, another was printed in Chicago. In this article titled, 'He'll Need an Agent,' the paper credited Dumont as a great man, who had no name recognition. The paper offered advice to Diefenbaker. If he wanted to try and get Dumont some recognition, he would have to convince Hollywood of his value, because that was "where such reputations are made and lost today."<sup>245</sup>

In an ironic twist, Dumont did have a press agent, 'Major' Burke, who not only was the man who hired him to tour with Cody, but a press agent to the most successful western-themed show of the century. However, since Dumont only toured for one year, lived in relative obscurity, and was Canadian, he was forgotten as an important part of western and frontier history on both sides of the border.

The gap between Canada and the United States can be seen on the northern side of the border as well. Whereas Cody is remembered and celebrated in the United States and Europe as a western champion, he has been forgotten for the most part on the northern side of the 49<sup>th</sup>. Many Canadians I have spoken with during the course of researching and writing this thesis do not know his name or his show, and often get him confused with 'Wild Bill' Hickok. Such collective amnesia begs the question: Why do Canadians and Americans forget each other's histories when they were so closely linked for so many years? Both countries were forced to create differences instead of seeing similarities in order to maintain their independence and otherness. There are differences in the foundations of our countries, our colonial histories, cultural make up, means of governance, and the way we envision our futures, but our geography,

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<sup>245</sup> *Chicago Daily Sun-Times*, June 30, 1958, Ms 62, Series ID, Box 1, Folder 5. Cody Collection, (MRL).

problems, solutions, and cultural experiences bring us together. William Frederick 'Buffalo Bill' Cody and his *Wild West* did not further a gap between our two countries; rather, he included Canada in his grand narrative of western exceptionalism.

## **A Note on Sources**

Over the course of research for this thesis I was able to make two separate trips to the archives in Cody, Wyoming, housed in the McCracken Research Library, which is attached to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, and is now called the Buffalo Bill Center of the West. During the second trip to the archives, the staff was in the process of reorganizing and restructuring the material in their collection. Some of the material used in this thesis, while still at the archive, may have been renamed or placed in a separate collection. I have tried to be as clear as possible in order for curious parties to find the sources consulted.

For the most part, the research was drawn from the Cody collection, while other portions are based on the Don Russell collection. The thesis and dissertation used as sources in this thesis were also housed at the McCracken Research Library. The newspaper clippings from the McCracken Research Library are from either the Cody collection or a photo/scrap book collection, depending on the time they were from. Some time was also spent talking with archivists and support staff as well as the curator of the Buffalo Bill wing of the museum. Fortunately, my first visit to Cody also coincided with arrivals and departures of international Cody researchers, and I spent time with them discussing our respective projects. These discussions helped to steer and focus the project and find its placement among international work done on William Cody and the Wild West program.

Since my trips, some of the items housed in Cody have been scanned and made available through the Cody papers project, and this work was also consulted where noted during the writing of this thesis.

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*A Factor in International Amity* Cody Archive digital resource

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Figure One



ii Figure Two



iii Figure Three

