

## PREFACE

This book argues that the Anglo-Canadian presence in the Canadian West was established with little concern for those who were there before and with little sensitivity to the culture of the First Nations and Métis peoples who occupied the land for many hundreds of years before the first settlers arrived in the West. Using the area around Fort Battleford as a focus, the book outlines the way of life that existed on the prairies before the Canadian presence was established. It goes on to examine the various institutions that placed the Anglo-Canadian elite in a position of power by the 1880s. The book investigates the role of the North West Mounted Police and the North-West Field Force in establishing Canadian hegemony and analyzes government policies that were employed to control those who were seen as a threat in the wake of the 1885 Resistance. It concludes with a description of the various interpretations of Fort Battleford that have evolved over time.

When I began with the Parks Service in the late 1970s the history of Fort Battleford was being presented as a story of law and order, of valour and the establishment of civilization in the West. I was uncomfortable with this emphasis and worked to persuade administrators of the program that the Mounties did not enter a vacuum and that the civilization they thought they were bringing was as controversial then as it is now.

The material on which this book is based was compiled when I worked as an historian for the Canadian Parks Service in the 1980s. The book has been written from articles and manuscripts produced over the years to meet the program needs of interpreting the history of Fort Battleford to the public.

I would like to thank the many colleagues I have worked with over the years: historians, archaeologists, interpreters, engineers, architects, planners and guides. Also thanks to the Superintendents, some of whom remain unconvinced that the context for interpreting the history of Fort Battleford needed to be broadened. The always helpful and attentive assistance of archivists made my research so much easier, particularly while working at the National Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, the Provincial Archives of Alberta, the Glenbow Alberta Archives, the Saskatchewan Archives Board, and the Shortt Library. I am grateful to the Tootoosis family at the Poundmaker Reserve, especially the late John Tootoosis and Gordon, for their hospitality and generosity in sharing the history of their people with me. Once again I am indebted to Sarah Carter for more than can be listed here, and also to our daughter, Mary, who is always an inspiration to me. Also, special thanks to Bob Coutts for help with the photographs and to George Melnyk and Brian Mlazgar for editing, Rick Lalonde for the maps, and William Singer for the cover illustration. Thanks also to Frits Pannekoek who hired me fresh out of graduate school. Frits encouraged historians working for governments to experiment, to try different approaches, to apply the methodologies of cultural and social history for the writing of public history. He encouraged us to take risks and to not simply use our sites to prop up established nation-building narratives; I dedicate this book to him.

*At the Chicago Columbian Exposition in 1893, the four hundredth anniversary provided the occasion for a straight forward celebration of all progress made since Columbus launched the conquest of the Western Hemisphere. But the five hundredth anniversary will come at an awkward point in our changing perceptions of history. The cult of "progress" has lost believers. The idea of a North America without industrial machinery, pollutants, pesticides, or nuclear waste does not immediately call to mind the words "primitive," "backward," or "savage." But more important, the 1992 commemoration planners must take into account that natives did not vanish; the descendants of the pre-Columbian Americans are very much alive — as are, in many cases, their memories and resentments of the conquest. In an age of attempted civility towards minorities, it seems poor taste, at best, to celebrate an invasion, a demographic catastrophe, and a conquest.*

Patricia Limerick  
*The Legacy of Conquest*