



TRAILS OF 1885

By Linda Epstein

Experience 1885 in 2010...

1885: A true-life “wild west” story. A pivotal year for Western Canada and for Canada. “The course of history was changed in 1885,” says Colleen Norrish, Project Manager for the Saskatchewan West Central Tourism Association (SWCT) “Trails of 1885” project.

In 1885, tensions were high. The railway was being completed across the country. The dwindling buffalo population had left the Indians on the edge of starvation. The North West Mounted Police (NWMP) and the Militia were engaged to control lawlessness and rogues from the U.S. Agricultural settlements were resurveyed, resulting in loss of access to river water. Métis leader Louis Riel’s efforts led to the Northwest Resistance. The Indians and Métis were defeated; however, many Métis went underground or fled to the United States.

2010: 125th anniversary of The Northwest Resistance, the first coordinated military action in Canada and the first military photography in the country. It was also the first time the Red Cross flag was raised in Canada.

Come hear the war cry and the cannon fire; hear stories around campfires; taste pemmican and tripe A Canadian beef; ride in a Red River cart; feel the challenges of the early settlers or witness the riverbank by canoe from the Militia’s vantage point; hear children laughing as they play traditional games; clap to the rhythm of the fiddle.

Batoche Historic Site – In 2010, go back to Batoche, July 16 – 25.

Tour the site of the last battle between the Métis and the NWMP in 1885. Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont led the resistance from rifle pits, but were defeated. Some of the pits can still be seen, and bullet holes from the battle are visible above the church door. The cemetery remains on the historic site. An award-winning multi-media show depicts the 1885 story.

Duck Lake – June 2010 will be Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre’s 50th anniversary.

Journey through the Métis resistance. Learn the effect of the 1885 Resistance on First Nations, Métis and European pioneers. Get a bird's-eye view of the area from the Centre's 24-metre tower.

Fort Battleford – Fort Battleford was established in 1876 and abandoned in 1924. During the 1885 conflicts, the NWMP at Fort Battleford provided a refuge. Discover the NWMP role in maintaining order and protecting the First Nations in the Canadian West. View original buildings and period pieces.

Fort Carlton Provincial Historic Park will celebrate its 200th anniversary in 2010. This Fort began as a trading post for the Hudson's Bay Company in 1810, and was used by the NWMP as their main fort in the Saskatchewan Valley. The Fort burned during battle, but was rebuilt as a historical site. Experience 1885 by touching and smelling buffalo hides, beaver pelts, war clubs, blankets, guns, twist tobacco, and birch bark baskets. See a tipi encampment and the ruts left by the Red River carts along the original Carlton Trail.

Frenchman Butte/Fort Pitt/Steele Narrows – In September 2010, the Steele Scouts re-enactment begins in Alberta and ends at Steele Narrows.

The Cree, desperate for food and supplies, captured Fort Pitt, Hudson's Bay Company's main trading post between Fort Edmonton and Fort Carlton. Discover the difficult terrain across Frenchman Butte to Steele Narrows where the Northwest Resistance ended in June 3, 1885.

Poundmaker First Nation offers a rare tour of its reserve during the June 2010 Treaty Days and 1885 Powwow. Every Saturday in July 2010, Poundmaker will commemorate the Battle of Cut Knife Hill, fought between Cree under Chief Poundmaker and the Canadian Militia Field Force. The action ended in defeat and withdrawal of the militia.

Saskatoon: The Canadian Red Cross will hold its Annual General Meeting in Saskatoon in June 2010 and re-dedicate the original flag flown in Batoche. A Field Hospital re-enactment partners Batoche National Historic Site with Saskatoon's Marr Residence. The Marr Residence is the only house requisitioned as military hospitals in 1885 that is still standing.

Humboldt: The first telegraph message was sent from Humboldt on August 25, 1878. The Dominion Telegraph Archaeology Project started in 2009, and will be launched in the spring/summer of 2010.

Glimpse life in the Original Humboldt Telegraph Station; tap out Morse code on the interactive telegraph computer station. View the panoramic mural of the 1885 Resistance.

Regina: For 135 years, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has played a significant role in creating Canadian identity. The RCMP Heritage Centre in Regina tells the story of the RCMP through interesting displays and artefacts.

In Alberta – Visit Fort Edmonton, Frog Lake, and Métis Crossing.

Manitoba Homecoming will be held in 2010. Explore Winnipeg's Riel House and the St. Boniface Museum.

Throughout Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba sites are prepared and events are being planned to present a “hands-on” discovery of Canada's history.

There are several tours of the Trails of 1885 sites, lasting from one to four days.

For information on tours, site links, events and history of 1885, go to the website: trailsof1885.com.

A Canadian story worth experiencing.