**SOCIAL STUDIES 7 UNIT FIVE Metis Resistances**

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**1. a)Who were the People of Red River?**

The Red River area was populated by Francophone and Anglophone Metis, Canadiens,

retired HBC employees, and Scottish and Irish colonists (Metis were either French Catholics, descendants of French-Canadian fur traders and Aboriginal women or English Protestants from Scottish fathers and Aboriginal mothers). About half colonists were French and half English.

The Metis had both Aboriginal and white aspects to their lifestyle, and they had their own laws and customs, one of which was the bison hunt.

**b) News Article: Buffalo Hunters Return to Red River**

The Metis used carts made out of wood (the Red River cart, with two large wheels); they hunted buffalo every year, partly for food and partly to trade pemmican with the HBC. But later in the 1800s the buffalo were becoming scarce.

Families lived close together on long narrow farms; the Red River colony could only be reached by dogsled in winter and canoe or York boat in summer.

In 1869 there was crop failure due to dry weather and grasshoppers.

**2. What triggered the Red River Resistance? THE FIRST METIS RESISTANCE**

By the 1860s the colony was facing stresses, such as crop failure and the decline of the buffalo.

Canada made plans to buy Rupert’s Land and the northwest as if nobody lived there; the HBC, Canada,

and Britain worked out an agreement to transfer Rupert’s Land to Canada in April 1869. Surveyors from Canada entered the area in July 1869; in October 1869 Louis Riel, the leader of the Metis, stopped surveyors from crossing his cousin’s farm. Although Canada sent William McDougall to govern Red River, in Dec. 1869 the Metis declared a provincial government at Fort Garry. Louis Riel was chosen as president.

Back in Ontario, Canadians reminded Sir John A. Macdonald that they expected him to take firm possession of Rupert’s Land for Canada, and if he wanted to remain prime minister he must listen to the people.

**3. The Death of Thomas Scott**

Thomas Scott was an Irish protestant from Ontario who came to the Red River. After he was convicted of assaulting his boss, he drifted into Fort Garry and became friends with Dr. Schultz (who owned the newspaper). Both disliked the French-Catholic Metis, believing that Prostestants should have power over the others, dismissing the idea of equality for people of other identities.

On Dec. 7, 1869, Riel and armed Metis surrounded Schultz’s store and arrested Scott, Schultz, and 45 supporters. They were thrown in jail, but later escaped and attacked Fort Garry. In Feb. 1870 they were put in jail again, and tried for conspiring against the Red River gov’t’s authority. Thomas Scott was rude to guards and threatened to kill Riel, was brought before a council and charged with disobeying those in charge. Scott was given the death sentence and shot by a firing squad on March 3,1870.

This event split the country in two: Protestants wanted Riel punished, and used the event to raise hatred and prejudice not only against the Metis but against all French and Catholics; French Canadians supported the Metis.

**4. The Manitoba Act**

A month before the execution of Thomas Scott, three Metis delegates had been sent to Ottawa to negotiate their list of rights. Though initially they were arrested due to Scott’s death, Macdonald eventually agreed to all their demands in order to end the resistance, and Manitoba was made a province on July 15, 1870.

Key Features of the Manitoba Act. The gov’t of Canada and the provisional gov’t at Red River negotiated the Manitoba Act. It brought the settlement of Red River into Confederation as an officially bilingual province – the province of Manitoba. In many ways, the Act was a compromise because many people thought they had a stake in how the Red River uprising was resolved.

Who had a Stake? (ie. Who was concerned with terms of this Act?) The **Metis**: wanted to protect French language, Catholic religion, and right to land; **Natives**: wanted rights to the land; **English-speaking Canadians** in Ontario: wanted the right to move west and farm;

**Canadian gov’t** under Sir. John A.: wanted to build a railway to B.C. and needed to acquire land easily.

What Compromise did the Manitoba Act Strike? It gave First Nations rights to land; made

both English and French official languages in legislature; reorganized Metis rights to land; it

established Manitoba as a province (ie. would have own gov’t); much smaller province than today (southern part only); only permanent residents could vote, therefore many Metis couldn’t because they were away on buffalo hunts.

**6. The Metis at South Branch (near present-day Batoche, Saskatchewan)**

Many Metis people left the Red River settlement after the first resistance, moving west through the prairies into present-day Saskatchewan and Alberta. They moved west partly to follow the buffalo, whose numbers were rapidly declining due to overhunting (they were killed by repeat-action rifles, up to 500 in a day, for sport, and farmers killed them for trampling on their crops). The Metis established farms and continued their annual buffalo hunts. But they knew they would eventually face the same challenges they’d faced at the Red River.

Canada now controlled the west. Macdonald established the North West Mounted Police in 1873, and planned to extent the railway west to BC. Surveyors and land speculators (people wanting to make money from selling the land to settlers) arrived, and one company was granted the land the Metis settlement was on, as if it didn’t exist.

Many petitions were sent to the gov’t, but there was no response. The Metis and First Nations tribes (Blackfoot and Cree) were ignored.

In 1884, Gabriel Dumont, a Metis leader, asked Riel (who lived in Montana now) to return and help.

**7. Riel Returns THE SECOND METIS RESISTANCE**

Life was difficult for the Metis. The buffalo was disappearing, and Metis, Cree, and Nakoda tribes were short of food. A smallpox epidemic had broken out among the First Nations. Even the white settlers weren’t happy, because the railway was being built farther south.

Riel returned, and insisted that Metis, First Nations, and white settlers should all work together, be patient, and try to negotiate. He had sent a petition already to the gov’t which it said it would consider. But the Canadian gov’t sent troops against them and the Metis decided to fight (many settlers remained neutral); two Cree leaders (Big Bear and Poundmaker) support the Metis’ provisional gov’t. Several incidents occurred; some Metis raided a store, and some Metis and twelve NW Mounted Police were killed. Some of Poundmaker’s men seized an HBC store and killed nine men (against Poundmaker’s wishes).

How did Canada respond? No troops were sent until the Metis declared a provisional gov’t. Both the telegraph (recently invented – fast communication) and the railway (fast transportation) enabled the gov’t to quickly get 600 troops to Batoche.The battle of Batoche lasted three days, ending in about 100 Metis and a few soldiers’ deaths. Louis Riel , Poundmaker and Big Bear gave themselves up, were charged with treason and found guilty. Only Riel was executed, though; he was hanged in Regina in Dec. 1885. One fury member remarked later that Riel was “tried for treason, but hanged for the murder of Thomas Scott”.

Both Metis and First Nations movements were restricted after this. They had to get passes before they could leave their reserves.

**8. Manitoba School Act**

The Manitoba School Act was a big protector of the French language, The Act established Catholic schools for people and were supported by gov’t funding. In 1890, separate schools were abolished by the gov’t and English was made the official language of gov’t.

When the Act was negotiated fifty percent of the population was French-speaking Catholics. Over the next 20 years the settlers changed this, and by 1890 only fifteen percent was French. This was because the gov’t sought out English-speaking immigrants to settle the west.