

How the death of Colten Boushie became recast as the story of a knight protecting his castle

"It's Mine!"

CANADA
The Right Land for the Right Man:

Canadian National Railways
— The Right Way! —

Full details obtainable from our local agent or upon application direct to—

LONDON
17-19 Cockspar S.
544-66 Leadenhall S.

LIVERPOOL
Cunard Bldg.

GLASGOW
75 Union Street

Local Agents:
SERCOMBE & HAYES,
9, South Street, DORCHESTER.

DAVILEY, DENVER & CO. LONDON

'It's mine!' declares a Canadian National Railways advertisement (circa 1920-1935) encouraging the western settler life.

During his opening statements in the trial of Gerald Stanley, the Saskatchewan farmer who on Friday was found not guilty in the murder of young Cree man Colten Boushie, defence lawyer Scott Spencer told the jury that, "For farm people, your yard is your castle. That's part of the story here." In the days that followed, some of the media coverage of the trial focused on the question of whether the notion of "defending one's castle" justifies the use of force resulting in injury or death to those who enter spaces they are seen as not belonging to.

Yet missing from the coverage, and absent in much of the discussion surrounding the trial, are the ways in which this sequence of events is intimately tied to the histories and present-day settlement of the country currently called Canada.

As the story goes, the Crown negotiated peaceful and consensual treaties with Indigenous populations that allowed for the settlement of the Prairies in exchange for the promise of civilization and protection. Early immigration posters and handbooks described the region as a vast, unoccupied, fertile hinterland, with little, if any, mention of Indigenous peoples. Colonial settlements offered newcomers property, independence, industry and, most of all, opportunities for wealth and bounty that would vastly exceed those available in their countries of origin.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW ADVERTISEMENT

The imagery shown on these advertisements and immigration materials, geared toward encouraging rapid settlement in the Prairies, idealized a patriarchal, nuclear family and an agrarian lifestyle. The central figure was typically an able-bodied, middle-aged farmer, often with his beautiful young wife by his side and a child cradled in his arms. In the background was often an image of the wide-open Prairies upon which his property – his "castle" – lies.

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These images help illustrate the intent behind the process of settler colonialism – not just its foundations, but the norms, values, expectations and aspirations that were held by individual settlers and inherited by many descendants. These images are noteworthy for the highly gendered, whitewashed, capitalist ideologies that they signify; namely, normative ideas of the family, home and domestic life.

They simultaneously appeal to, and uphold, the institution of masculinity: the ability to build a home, provide for and protect one's family, and – most importantly – to exercise control over one's private domain. This domain purportedly exists and is bound within a lawless land, with the farmer serving as king of this realm – and of his castle – whose responsibility it then becomes to protect against intrusions or disruptions of this narrative.

However, as with any story, this isn't the only version. For even more telling than the stories that are represented in these images are the stories that aren't shown at all. When we show these depictions in our classrooms, the immediate response from most of our students, when asked to reflect upon what is absent from these images, is the clear erasure of Indigenous presence. Colonial settlement narratives either absented Indigenous peoples entirely from their portrayals of Prairie life, or when they did appear, they were described as occupying a role that would not interfere with the agrarian settler lifestyle.

These images help to historicize the contemporary hyper-racialization and gendering of space in the Prairies. For it is not only Indigenous peoples' physical bodies that are under assault in processes of colonial dispossession, but also our long-standing relationships to our ancestral lands. These images speak not only to the absence of Indigenous bodies from colonial spaces as a past phenomenon, but also to the ongoing violence and dispossession that is necessary to create, maintain and "secure" these idealized colonial settlements. After all, Indigenous removal and erasure aren't just historical events; rather, our attempted eradication has to be actively carried out in perpetuity.



A Government of Canada poster from 1925 encourages immigration to the western provinces, 'the New Homeland.'

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

The dispossession and assault on continuing Indigenous presence has assumed a variety of forms over the years: from one-sided and false interpretations of treaties as land transactions, to forced removal and imprisonment on reserves, to the residential-school system, to the legislated removal of Indigenous identity through policies of enfranchisement, among many other things. The drive to eliminate Indigenous peoples is – quite literally – part of the foundational structure of this country. Of course, this eliminatory logic targets Indigenous bodies not just because of their physical presence, but because of their difference.

Under the Indian Act, for many years it was illegal for Indigenous peoples to even protest the conditions of our oppression, as raising money to fund court cases in the interest of protecting our basic human rights rendered us as criminals in our own homelands. In other words, when we attempted to address colonial intrusions, our efforts were criminalized. As was our very presence outside of reserve lands.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW ADVERTISEMENT

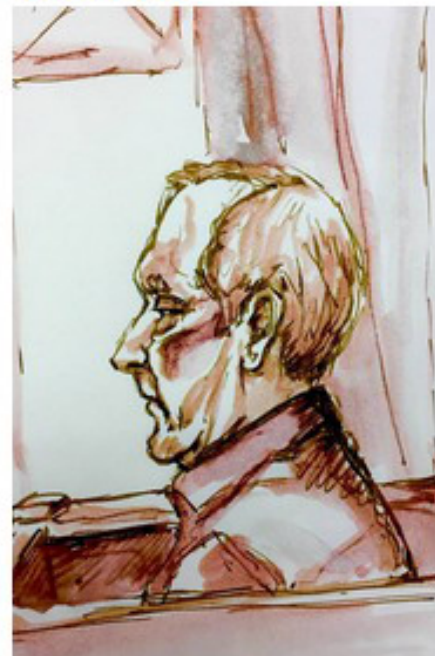
For its part, Canada sought to achieve this by presenting Indigenous lands as lawless spaces absent legal order and continually crafting and revising the judicial narratives that gave settler legality to these spaces, as critics such as Anishinaabe scholar Heidi Stark have argued. The colonial formation of Canada's legal and political institutions is also reflected in the enduring relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in these geographies. Thus, we should not lose sight of the ongoing link between trading forts and individual farmers' "castles" and the fraught histories of these spaces on the Prairies. Indeed, after the North-West Rebellion in the area of Fort Battleford in 1885, and the subsequent hanging of those who took part, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald remarked in a letter to Indian Commissioner Edgar Dewdney that "the executions ... ought to convince the Red Man that the White Man governs."

Given this history, it should come as no surprise, then, that Gerald Stanley's defence lawyer Scott Spencer argued that for farmers, "your yard is your castle."

What should not be lost here is how castles (and now farms) have served as sites of capitalist accumulation and protectionism, as romanticized spaces wherein white knights protect against incursion from hostile outside forces. Like a modern-day Lancelot, the castle narrative draws on the need for a farmer not only to protect his kingdom, but also the need to save his "maiden" from the inevitable threat posed by racialized outsiders. (It should be noted that Mr. Stanley claimed one of the reasons he approached the SUV in which Mr. Boushie was sitting was because "I thought the car had run over my wife.")

Indeed, media coverage of this trial – and discussion in the days after the verdict – was rife with outspoken farmers in the Saskatchewan farming community advocating for violence, having viewed themselves historically, and in the present day, as heroic frontiersmen taming the wild and cultivating their little outposts of empire. But here we ask the following question: How is it that the death of a young Cree man becomes recast as the story of a knight protecting his castle? What of the untold stories of those whose lives and homelands are continually subjugated in order for this imagery of "the castle" to be sustained? Castles evoke mental portraits of fortresses besieged, of hordes of enemies attempting to crash the gates of the wealthy, aristocratic and armed gentry defending themselves against the blood-thirsty intruders outside their walls and beyond their moats. These, no doubt, are the images and representations that the castle narrative intends to cultivate in the minds of those sympathetic to or willing to entertain the idea that the use of deadly force is justified to defend colonial settlements.

The Stanley verdict's aftermath



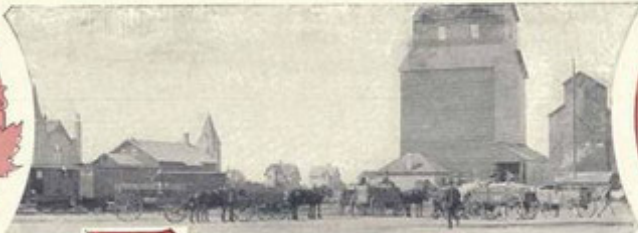

Get caught up here on The Globe's coverage of Saskatchewan Cree man Colten Boushie's death, the trial of Gerald Stanley and the furor his acquittal has created.

But what if we invert the intruder narrative? What if we bear in mind that the continuity of settler presence on Indigenous lands is itself premised on intrusion, a constant structure of intrusion dependent upon Indigenous disappearance? How can we reconcile the inhospitable notion of "intrusion" that then rationalizes settler violence with the nearly inconceivable acts of generosity that Indigenous peoples have extended and continue to extend in agreeing to share the land through treaty? Viewed from this perspective, the settler imagery of a constant threat of Indigenous violence appears as a perverse reversal of the actual colonial reality: that Indigenous existence itself is understood by settlers as a threat that always already rationalizes the use of violence. The outpouring of extreme racism following the jury's decision is only further evidence of the ways in which the legal entrenchment of the "castle" narrative functions to enhance settler entitlement to enact violence to protect their claims to land and property.

Erica Violet Lee, an Indigenous community organizer from Saskatchewan, spoke out about the violence perpetrated against Colten Boushie and what she saw during the pretrial for Gerald Stanley. She remarked that regardless of the story the defence provided, "The reality is that Gerald Stanley left that farm alive, and Colten Boushie did not." The journalist who interviewed her provided the following description of Lee's presence at the pretrial: "[Lee] sat on a small uncomfortable chair in the chamber, the size and structure of which made it difficult for people in the courtroom to physically comfort one another. The court proceeding took place under a looming portrait of Queen Elizabeth II, whose royal officers were positioned outside the courtroom, monitoring the crowd outside who had come to grieve." The castle and its attendant imagery is alive and well even in the spaces that absolved Gerald Stanley of being responsible for the death of Mr. Boushie, in a site that was supposed to deliver justice. Yet this narrative is intimately linked to Indigenous peoples' common stories as well – that is, the historical and contemporary forms of sexism, racism, violence and oppression upon which colonial castles are built.



Call of the West: Canada's pitch for settlement in Saskatchewan

THE CHRISTMAS GLOBE '03


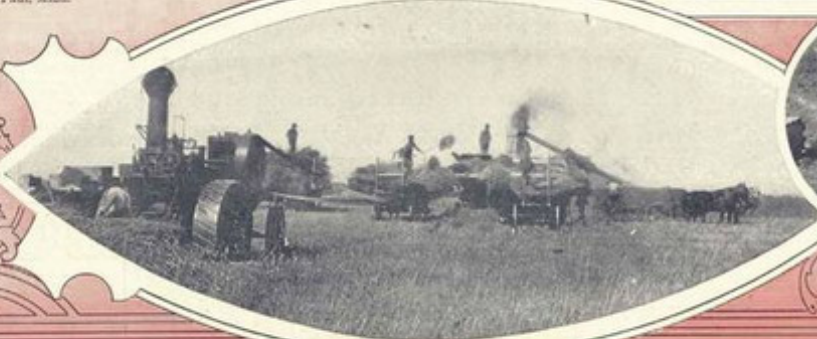




FREE FARMS

THOUSANDS OF
FREE GRANT HOMESTEADS
160 ACRES
OF THE BEST LAND IN THE
WORLD. STILL AWAIT SETTLERS
IN Western Canada.

CANADIAN IMMIGRATION SERVICE
The Superintendent of Immigration, Ottawa, Canada, W. D. SCOTT.
CANADA—J. OROD SMITH, Winnipeg, Man., Commissioner of Immigration; R. A. BERRISS, Port Arthur, Ont.; J. A. MCGOVERN, Port Arthur, Ont.; FATHER H. BLAIR, care Dom. Imm. Agent, Montreal; D. GAUTHIER, Laurvides, P.Q.; A. REBOUT, Matawa, Ont.; REV. H. L. VACHON, O.M.I., Gawa, Ont.; J. HOOGHABAN, Montreal, P. Q.; J. V. LANTALEN, St. John, N. B.; F. W. ANSAND, Halifax, N.S.; P. DOYLE, Quebec, P. Q.; FATHER LANGLOIS, care Dom. Immigration Agent, Montreal, P. Q.
The Commissioner of Emigration, London, England, W. T. R. PRESTON, 11 and 14 Charing Cross, W. C.
ENGLAND—ALFRED JURY, Old Castle Buildings, Presson's Row, Liverpool; C. H. MITCHELL, Newton Chambers, 43 Cannon St., Birmingham; H. H. MURRAY, Western Hall Bldg., Cardiff, Wales.
SCOTLAND—JOHN BRUCE WALKER, 52 St. Enoch Square, Glasgow.
IRELAND—EDWARD O'KELLY, 13 Queen's Square, Belfast; JOHN WEBSTER, 14 Westmoreland St., Dublin.
BELGIUM—D. TREAU DE COELL, Rue de Souve, Anvers. FRANCE—10 Rue de Rome, Paris.
UNITED STATES—M. V. MCINNIS, 6 Avenue Theatre Block, Detroit, Michigan; JAMES GRIEVE, Spokane, Washington; G. A. LAUBIER, South Ste. Marie, Michigan; J. S. CHAFFORD, 125 West 9th Street, Kansas City, Missouri; T. O. CURRIE, Room 13 B, Callahan Block, Milwaukee, Wis.; J. H. McLACHLAN, 397 Third Street, Wausau, Wis.; W. V. BENNETT, 801 New York Bldg Building, Omaha, Nebraska; CHARLES PALLINO, Clifford Block, Grand Forks, North Dakota; W. H. ROGERS, Watertown, South Dakota, Box 116; H. M. WILLIAMS, Room 15, Law Building, Toledo, Ohio; JOHN C. DUNNAN, Room 6, Big Four Building, Indianapolis, Ind.; C. J. BRACOURTON, Room 630, Quincy Building, Chicago, Ill.; BENJAMIN DAVIES, The Dunn Block, Room 6, Central Ave., Great Falls, Montana; C. O. SWANSON and E. T. HOLMES, 315 Jackson St., St. Paul, Minn.

Ask or write to the nearest agent, whose address you will find opposite, for **Literature and Maps**, containing full information and directions about these lands and how to acquire free homesteads. If you are interested in **FARMING or RANCHING** it will pay you to investigate at once. Hundreds of letters from successful settlers bearing testimony to the fact that **Farming in Western Canada pays well** and cannot be excelled for **Grain Growing and Mixed Farming** are on file in the Department of the Interior, Immigration Branch. **Ask for the Booklet, "Prosperity follows Settlement,"** containing many of these letters and descriptions of the country.

1903: 'Thousands of free grant homesteads, 160 acres of the best land in the world, still awaits settlers in Western Canada,' reads an advertisement in The Globe's Christmas magazine. (Enlarge Image)



What Does Saskatchewan Offer?

In presenting Saskatchewan's claims for your consideration it is necessary to recite only a few facts. As a Province, Saskatchewan is only three years old. Much of it is not three years old if we date its birth from the advent of the homesteader and the time when the hum of the binder was first heard. Other parts have been peopled for a score of years, and the success of those early settlers has carried the fame of Saskatchewan far beyond the bounds of Canada. Thousands of the best settlers in the world are trekking from the United States across that invisible boundary that separates two great English-speaking nations. Other thousands are travelling annually from the remotest parts of the Empire to have a part in subduing to King Wheat those well-nigh boundless plains that until recently knew no dominion save the decree of nature.

An idea of the progress made by Saskatchewan may be obtained from a compar-

What Do You Expect in a Country?

Do you not want it to provide a home in which you will be surrounded by the maximum of advantage and the minimum of inconvenience, a location in which you will be able to redeem the past if you have not been successful, or, if you have made good progress, a place where your future success will surpass former achievements?

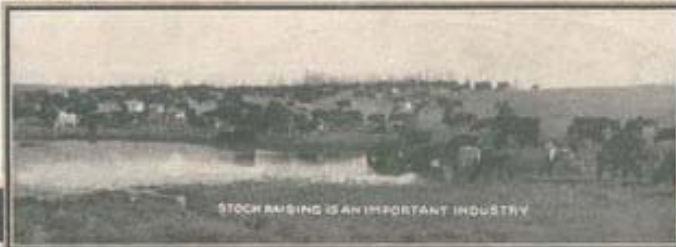
It may be assumed that in making a change you have a very definite object in view. You are seeking a better field and a wider sphere, where, under changed conditions, you expect to improve your circumstances.

and hogs are raised. Cattle are exported in considerable numbers, but the sheep, swine and poultry raised are not sufficient to supply the local market, and splendid opportunities for stock raising are found. The number of cattle in the Province in 1906 was 472,954. In 1901 it was 217,054. The number of sheep increased from 73,097 in 1901 to 121,290 in 1906. Swine increased in number from 27,553 in 1901 to 123,916 in 1906. These figures are not large, but the increase per cent. makes a creditable showing.

An important industry in Saskatchewan is lumbering. Perhaps no one who is not familiar with the Province would expect to find lumber in a prairie Province, yet in northern Saskatche-

wan there are extensive spruce forests that yield splendid building material. The natural resources invite capital to develop it. Saw-mills and pulp mills are there afforded a splendid field for operation.

But the great resource of Saskatchewan is her soil-wat-



STOCK RAISING IS AN IMPORTANT INDUSTRY



BREAKING UP THE VIRGIN PRAIRIE



A GREAT CROP

son of the census records. In 1891 the population of the area now included in the Province was approximately 30,220. In 1901 the population was 81,279, and in 1906 it had reached 257,762. There are now about 300,000 people in Saskatchewan. An increase in population in a new country means an extension of all the conveniences dear to a settler's heart—railways, postal facilities, schools, churches, good roads, telegraphs, telephones, trading facilities, etc., etc. The population is coming to Saskatchewan. These conveniences are coming to the population.

In 1908 there were 320,000 acres under crop in that portion of the west now included in Saskatchewan. In 1906 the area of grain crops in the Province was 2,374,108 acres. The expansion of grain production in ten years is shown by the following table:

	1908	1906
Wheat	4,783,440 bush.	41,520,808 bush.
Oats	1,569,412	43,663,040 "
Barley	182,859	2,006,113 "
Flax		1,370,000 "

But wheat is not the only product of the plains. Large numbers of cattle, sheep

What Does That Mean to You?

Do you wish to be independent? Here is a chance to assert your self. Do you wish to engage in a calling as homestead or tenant? Here is the opportunity. Do you wish to locate in a Province where nature has been almost prodigal in dispensing her gifts? Then seek out Saskatchewan. Do you wish to have an equal chance? Then come at once before all the homestead lands have been taken up.

The booklet of Saskatchewan, our crop reports and bulletins containing general information will be sent to any person applying for them.

BUREAU OF INFORMATION AND STATISTICS,
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA

ed prairie, in which humus and alluvium combine to make a soil second to none for fertility. And this fertile land the Government has been parceling out to bona fide settlers in lots of 160 acres to each eligible entrant. Now that generous offer has been made more acceptable.

Where they formerly offered 160 acres they now make it possible to obtain 320 acres—the first 160 acres upon the same conditions as formerly, and the second 160 acres is sold to homesteaders at a small price per acre. For \$500, and upon compliance with the homestead regulations, with payments spread over eight years, and only \$20.00 to pay during the first three, a settler may become the owner of 320 acres of Saskatchewan land.



FIELD OF WHEAT AND GRAIN ELEVATORS

An advertisement in a 1908 Christmas magazine promotes settlement in Saskatchewan, which had attained provincehood only three years earlier. "Thousands are travelling annually from the remotest parts of the Empire to have a part in subduing to King Wheat those well-nigh boundless plains that until recently knew no dominion save the decree of nature," it states. [\(Enlarge Image\)](#)

160 ACRES FREE

The Evolution of a Homestead

THE WHEAT GROWING
ARC OF WESTERN CANADA
 IS PLACED AT 171,000,000
 ACRES. (DR. SAUNDERS
 DON EXPERIMENTAL DATA)
 IN 1908 EGGS TAKE 8,000,000
 WAS UNDER CULTIVATION AND
 ABOUT 100,000,000 ACRES
 UNDER SETTLEMENT



**THE
 HOMESTEAD ENTRIES**
 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR
 1907-8 NUMBERED OVER
 30,000, REPRESENTING
 MORE THAN 5,000,000
 ACRES OR AN AREA
 EQUAL TO ONE-FOURTH
 THE TOTAL AREA OF EITHER
 SCOTLAND OR IRELAND



OF THE WHEAT
 Officially Inspected at Winnipeg
 in one year

50.7	per cent	graded Manitoba Hard
30.6		No. 1 Northern
81.3		of the total came within the two highest grades.



IN 1906
 (LAST YEAR)
 ONLY 1 OUT OF EVERY 20
 ACRES OF WHEAT LANDS
 WAS UNDER CROPS



Census Figures
 of Wheat Production in
 MANITOBA, SASKATCHEWAN & ALBERTA

1881	1,153,328
1891	17,864,679
1901	53,456,859
1906	110,586,824



WITHIN 15 DAYS
 (from Sept 24 to 13th 1908)
 OVER 1,700,000 ACRES OF
 LAND WERE TAKEN BY HOMESTEAD
 PRE-EMPTION AND PURCHASE, IN THE FIRST
 MONTH AVAILABLE BY THE NEW DOMINION
 LANDS ACT.



**WHY? ALL PEOPLE COMING TO
 ALL QUARTERS OF THE GLOBE
 BECAUSE
 NO OTHER COUNTRY OFFERS
 ANYTHING LIKE IT
 A FREE FARM
 A FINE CLIMATE
 A FAIR CHANCE
 TO EVERY MAN - WITH OR
 WITHOUT CAPITAL**



A LITTLE OR POST
 CARD WILL BRING FULL PARTICULARS
 TO YOUR DOOR FREE OF
 CHARGE. WRITE TO
W. D. SCOTT,
 Superintendent, Dominion
 OTTAWA, CANADA
 OR TO
J. OBED SMITH,
 Agent, Suite of Cottages,
 812 CHURCH STREET, LONDON, O., U.S.A.

Another ad in the 1908 Christmas magazine extols the fertility and output of western farmland. 'No other country offers anything like it: A free farm, a fine climate, a fair chance to every man - with or without capital.' (Enlarge Image)

WESTERN CANADA

THE NEW ELDORADO

HOMES FOR
EVERYBODY
EASY
TO REACH
NOTHING
TO FEAR
PROTECTED BY
THE GOVERNMENT



WHEAT
LAND
RICH
VIRGIN SOIL
LAND FOR
MIXED FARMING
LAND FOR
CATTLE RAISING

A WHEAT FARM
IN THE
CANADIAN WEST



HARVESTING RED CROP IN WESTERN CANADA



THE OLD AND THE NEW HOME

FREE
160 ACRES
**WESTERN
CANADA**
FARM
LANDS

"WESTWARD THE STAR OF EMPIRE TAKES ITS WAY"

THIS IS YOUR
OPPORTUNITY
WHY NOT
EMBRACE IT?

INFORMATION AND ADVICE
CAN BE OBTAINED FROM
W.D. SCOTT
SUPERINTENDENT OF IMMIGRATION
OTTAWA, CANADA
J. OBED SMITH
ASST. SUPERINTENDENT OF IMMIGRATION
11-12 CHARING CROSS
LONDON, ENG.

In 1911, an ad in the Christmas magazine dubs Western Canada 'the new Eldorado,' referring to a mythological Indigenous kingdom in South America rich in gold. (Enlarge Image)