

The Death of Père Aulneau, 1736: The Development of Myth in the Northwest

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On 6 June 1736, a party of twenty-one Frenchmen was killed by Native warriors on an island in Lake of the Woods. The attackers were a mixed group of Teton-Lakota, Dakota, and Ojibwa, and the French victims included the Jesuit missionary Jean-Pierre Aulneau and Jean-Baptiste de la Vérendrye, son of the explorer and trader Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendrye. There were no survivors among the French party, and thus no eyewitnesses aside from the perpetrators. Despite this, the incident became the subject of several written and oral accounts, and the death of the Jesuit Aulneau the focal point of the discourse. The narratives include the testimony of those who found the bodies of the victims, accounts written by the Jesuits of New France during the years following the incident, and oral traditions passed on in the Lake of the Woods region through subsequent decades. In this paper I propose to examine the evolution of the narrative traditions surrounding the events of 6 June 1736, and in so doing seek a lesson and a caution for narrators of history.

By the 1730s the French, having already established several posts in the Mississippi Valley and the Petit Nord, began to extend their explorations and their network of trade westward to the Great Plains. At the forward edge of this movement was Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Vérendrye, who in 1732 established a post on Lake of the Woods, which he named Fort Saint-Charles, in honour of Charles de la Boische, the Marquis de Beauharnois and Governor of New France. The Jesuits of New France moved in concert with this westward expansion. News had arrived at Quebec of an intriguing Native group known as the Mandans, who lived in villages on the Missouri River and were said to be bearded and fair-skinned, and so in 1734 it was decided to send a missionary to these people. The Society could spare only one man, and the task was assigned to Jean-Pierre Aulneau, a newly-ordained and newly-arrived

confrère from the Vendée. Aulneau went west with La Vérendrye in June 1735.

In the 1730s Lake of the Woods lay on the northern edge of a zone of conflict between several Native groups. Before 1737 enmity ran deepest between the Cree, who occupied a vast woodland region stretching north and north-west from the lake, and the Teton-Lakota branch of the Sioux nation, who had recently moved westward onto the Plains, but who retained a presence in the upper Mississippi region. The Cree allied themselves with the Assiniboine, a Siouan group living to the south of Lake Winnipeg, while the Teton-Lakota were often joined by the Dakota, the eastern branch of the Sioux nation, who occupied the upper Mississippi valley, and the Ojibwa, who inhabited the lands around Lake Superior but who were beginning to move south and westward.¹

The relationship between the French and the Dakota is the key to understanding the prelude to the killing of La Vérendrye's party. In order to trade with the French, the Dakota had carried out ceremonies by which they and their partners in commerce had formed kinship ties.² This trading alliance was mutually satisfactory, and by 1731 a large Dakota settlement had grown up around Fort Beauharnois, the French trading post at Lake Pepin on the Upper Mississippi. But with French expansion north and northwest, and the development of relations between La Vérendrye and the Cree, the Dakota-French alliance became strained. In early July 1733 a skirmish between a Cree war expedition and a group of Dakota was fought in a dense forest on Dakota lands; when the Dakota demanded to know who was attacking them, their Cree adversaries replied "C'est le françois." Then, in May 1734, in order to cement a trading alliance with the Cree, La Vérendrye allowed his eldest son Jean-Baptiste to accompany a new war party against the Dakota. The kinship ties had been broken, and the stage was set for the drama that would come to be known as the "Lake of the Woods Tragedy."

Pierre de la Vérendrye and Aulneau arrived at Fort Saint-Charles on 2 October 1735 and passed the winter there. In a letter written from the post in April 1736 Aulneau had anticipated passing that summer and fall with the Assiniboine as a prelude to his mission to the Mandan. But when La Vérendrye decided at the beginning of June to send a brigade east to Michilimackinac for supplies, Aulneau asked to join the party. It

¹ The French sources often fail to distinguish between the various branches of the Sioux family. When they do, the Teton-Lakota are usually referred to as the "Sioux des plains" and the Dakota as the "Sioux du lac."

² For the background to these kinship trading alliances, see Gary Clayton Anderson, *Kinsmen of Another Kind: Dakota-White Relations in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1650-1862* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 30.

is unclear why Aulneau made this request, but it has been suggested that he wanted to go to confession. A small advance party set out from Fort Saint-Charles on 2 June, and, unbeknownst to La Vérendrye, was detained and pillaged by a group of 130 Teton-Lakota, Dakota, and Ojibwa warriors, who had recently arrived on the lake. On 3 June the main French party was constituted. Aulneau made his request to be included, and asked La Vérendrye to send his eldest son Jean-Baptiste along with the brigade to ensure its speedy progress. The men embarked in three canoes on 5 June 1736. They numbered twenty-one; none would survive the next twenty-four hours. The killing of the party was a cataclysmic event for the French, Cree, Teton-Lakota, Dakota, and Ojibwa, disrupting patterns of travel, exchange and relationship in the Lake of the Woods region and beyond, and forestalling for a time French expansion westward.

While oral traditions regarding the engagement continued to be transmitted in the Lake of the Woods region itself, the incident was soon lost to European and Canadian historical discourse, and this historical fog only grew thicker with the end of the French regime in 1760. The story reemerged over a century later, with the retrieval and publication of several oral and manuscript sources, which appeared in a span of twenty-eight years between 1888 and 1916.³ The recovery of the docu

³ Documents relating to La Vérendrye's activities are housed at Aix-en-Provence at the Centre des archives d'outre-mer, Fonds des colonies, series C11E, volume 16. These documents were published in French in 1888 in volume 6 of Pierre Margry, ed., *Mémoires et documents pour servir à l'histoire des origines françaises des pays d'outre-mer: découvertes et établissements des Français dans l'ouest et dans le sud de l'Amérique septentrionale* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Leclerc, 1888). A bilingual edition of the La Vérendrye documents was published in 1927 as Lawrence J. Burpee, ed., *Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de la Vérendrye and His Sons* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1927).

Papers belonging to the Aulneau family were recovered in 1889. In that year three Jesuits gave an Advent mission in the Vendée, at the conclusion of which a man approached the fathers to ask if they would be interested in seeing some old papers relating to a family member who had belonged to the Society. These were translated and published in 1893 as Arthur E. Jones, ed., *The Aulneau Collection: 1734-1745* (Montreal: St Mary's College, 1893).

Between 1896 and 1901 the *Jesuit Relations* of Reuben Gold Thwaites appeared; this monumental work contains, in addition to the published *Relations*, hundreds of personal letters, journals, and other documents, including several which refer to the death of Aulneau. See: Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland: Burrows, 1896-1901), 73 vols.

The oral account collected by Père G.-A. Belcourt in 1843 was published in Camille de Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1906), 2 vols.

mentary heritage prompted a search for the sites associated with the events of 1736, and led to the identification of Massacre Island, and, in 1908, to the discovery of the site of Fort Saint-Charles and of the remains of the victims themselves.

The recovered narratives tell a compelling tale. There are three kinds of sources: the first are the accounts written by La Vérendrye and his associates in the weeks and months immediately following the incident, the second is comprised of letters written by Jesuits of New France between 1736 and 1739, and the third consists of local oral accounts, transcribed during the nineteenth century.

Pierre de la Vérendrye's own account is contained in his annual report for 1736-1737, sent to the Marquis de Beauharnois, and then on to the Comte de Maurepas, the French Secretary of State.⁴ La Vérendrye's recital of events is spare yet evocative, and conveys the growing sense of dread that the explorer felt after the departure of the brigade on 5 June. He reports that on the 8th a party of canoes arrived at Fort Saint-Charles from Kaministiquia on Lake Superior; forebodingly, it had not encountered the eastbound travellers. On the 12th a Native party arrived with word that the small advance party had been detained and robbed, and on the 17th another party arrived from Kaministiquia; neither had they encountered the canoes. La Vérendrye records that he sent out a search party under the command of his sergeant, Sieur le Gras. The next entry in his account is as follows:

On ... the twenty-second, the sergeant and his men arrived bringing the sad news of the massacre of the twenty-one men seven leagues from the fort on a little island. Most of the bodies were found, all decapitated, and lying in a circle against one another, which made me to conclude that they were killed while holding counsel; the heads were wrapped in beaver skins.⁵

We have here the barest of details: all the men decapitated, the bodies in a circle, the heads in beaver skins (perhaps in mockery of the French love

The manuscript of David Thompson's narrative of his western experiences, containing his account of the Lake of the Woods affair, was written in 1846-1850 and first published in 1916 as J.B. Tyrrell, ed., *David Thompson's Narrative of His Explorations in North America 1784-1812* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1916).

Except in the case of Thompson, whose manuscript narrative is housed at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, in this paper I employ the published transcriptions and translations.

⁴Report of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Vérendrye to Charles de la Boische, Marquis de Beauharnois, June 2, 1736-August 3, 1737. *Journals and Letters*, 213-62.

⁵Ibid., 219.

for furs). La Vérendrye makes no particular reference to either his son Jean-Baptiste or to Père Aulneau.

A second account was written by a member of the party which found the bodies, and was included in La Vérendrye's correspondence to Beauharnois.⁶ The anonymous author writes:

The heads were placed on beaver robes, most of them scalped; the missionary had one knee on the ground, an arrow in his side, his breast split open, his left hand against the ground, his right hand raised. The Sieur de la Vérendrye was lying on his face, his back all scored with knife cuts, a stake thrust into his side, headless, his body ornamented with leggings and armpieces of porcupine.⁷

The beaver robes reappear, but everything else in this report is new. Three scenes are presented, in ever greater detail: the group (13 words in the original French), the corpse of Aulneau (24 words) and the corpse of Jean-Baptiste de la Vérendrye (34 words). While the narrative builds up to the description of the explorer's son, let us keep in mind the carefully-sketched picture of Aulneau: knee on the ground, an arrow in the side, breast split open, left hand on the ground, right hand raised.

The author of this report anticipated that more details of the episode would emerge, and as 1736 progressed bits of information began to leak out at three French posts: Kaministiquia at the west end of Lake Superior, Chequamegon on the south shore of the same lake, which were both frequented by Ojibwa, and Fort Beauharnois at Lake Pepin, in Dakota lands. It was confirmed that the majority of the attackers were Teton-Lakota, but that they had been joined by Dakota and Ojibwa. On 18 August two of the French canoes, along with twenty of the warriors' canoes, were found in the south end of Lake of the Woods. All were bloodied, and limbs were found buried in the sand. On 17 September the French trader at Lake Pepin, Sieur de Saint-Pierre, reported that he received a Dakota chief at his post. Spying an ornament in the chief's ear, Saint-Pierre recognized the seal of Père Aulneau, tore off both seal and ear, and turned the chief out. On the same day the bodies of Jean-Baptiste and Aulneau, and the heads of the others, were retrieved and brought to Fort Saint-Charles to be interred.

The second body of texts consists of accounts written by Aulneau's Jesuit confreres in the three years following the events. Père Nicolas de Gonnor, posted at the Huron mission of Lorette near Québec, wrote to an

⁶ Anonymous Report to Charles de la Boische, Marquis de Beauharnois, 1736. Ibid, 262-6.

⁷ Ibid., 264.

unidentified recipient in 1736 asking that the news of Aulneau's death be conveyed to the late priest's mother.⁸ De Gonnor writes:

[Aulneau] was surprised with twenty other Frenchmen; it is not known how they were put to death. No sign of distrust was perceived, nor had the Natives tortured them as they usually do those they take in war. It is conjectured that they were surprised while asleep, and attacked suddenly, after which the heads of all were severed from the bodies. It is said, however, that from the position in which the father's body was found, that he was on his knees when he was decapitated; this is why one of those who found him took his *calotte* [skull cap], saying that, as poor as he was, he would not give it up for a thousand ecus.⁹

Some details here are consistent with the accounts from Fort Saint-Charles: the decapitation of all the victims and the posture of Aulneau. The conjecture that the Frenchmen were "surprised while asleep" is new, and introduces the first real inconsistency in the accounts (unless Aulneau had the habit of sleeping in a kneeling position; perhaps this was an ascetic discipline of the time).

The second Jesuit account is that of Père Joseph François Lafitau, contained in a letter written at Paris on 4 April 1738 and addressed to the Jesuit Father General Francis Retz at Rome.¹⁰ Lafitau states simply:

As to what relates to Father Pierre Aulneau, nothing new has been learnt beyond what was first written ... The savage band came upon them unawares and slaughtered them all. Father Aulneau was stabbed twice and was decapitated.¹¹

Despite the fact that Lafitau states that there is "nothing new," the detail of Aulneau's being stabbed twice makes its first surviving appearance here.

The third, fullest, and most intriguing Jesuit account is that written by Père Pierre de Jaunay, of the mission at Michilimackinac. The letter is written to Madame Aulneau herself, and is dated 28 September 1739 – over three years after the killings took place.¹² De Jaunay cautiously en-

⁸Nicolas de Gonnor to unidentified recipient, 1736. *Jesuit Relations*, 68: 312-19

⁹ *Ibid.*, 316-17.

¹⁰ Joseph François Lafitau to Francis Retz, 4 April 1738. *Aulneau Collection*, 91-2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Pierre de Jaunay to Madame Aulneau, 28 September 1739. *Ibid.*, 110-12. Madame Aulneau, in addition to being the mother of two Jesuits, was an affiliate of the community. She corresponded with many Jesuits in New France, and sent the missionaries religious articles such as scapulars and crucifixes, and on at least one occasion leek seeds from her garden.

dorses the reliability of his account, asserting “here is what I have learned from hearsay, and some of my sources of information seem trustworthy” and stating that many of these details are derived from “various accounts of the Indians.” What he writes attests to a significant evolution in the story of the death of Aulneau:

In the first place, the majority of the Indians implicated were averse to putting him to death. In the second place, it was through sheer bravado that a crazy-brained Indian set at naught the consequences which held the others in awe. A third particular I have gathered is that scarcely had the deed been perpetrated than a deafening peal of thunder struck terror into the whole band. They fled the spot, believing that Heaven was incensed at what they had done. Finally, that the portable chapel, and, specifically, the chalice which was plundered, had fallen into the hands of a widowed squaw who had several grown up sons, the pride and wealth of the tribe. In a remarkably short lapse of time, all or nearly all of them perished in her sight. This she ascribed to the chalice which her sons had given her, so she rid herself of it by throwing it into a river.¹³

There is virtually nothing here that is *not* new: the debate among the attackers, the figure of the single bold Native who assaults Aulneau, the sudden peal of thunder and the episode of the stolen chalice, which seems to wreak its own crude vengeance.

We move forward some sixty years for our next account. In August 1797, while en route from Grand Portage at the head of Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg, the North West Company fur trader David Thompson passed through Lake of the Woods and heard a fantastic tale associated with a place called the Isles aux Morts. Thompson set down the account in his narrative:

It seems that when the French from Canada first entered these fur countries, every summer a Priest came to instruct the Traders and their men in their religious duties, and preach to them and the Natives in Latin it being the only language the Devil does not understand and cannot learn; He had collected about twenty Men with a few of the Natives upon a small Island, of rock; and while instructing them a large war party of Sieux Indians came on them and began the work of death; not one escaped; whilst this was going on the Priest kept walking backwards and forwards on a level rock of about fifty yards in length, with his eyes fixed on his book, without seeming to notice them; at length as he turned about, one of them sent an arrow through him, and he fell dead. At this deed the rocky isle trembled and shook; the Sieux Indians became afraid, and they retired without stripping the dead, or taking

¹³ Ibid., 111.

their scalps. These Isles, of which there are three, are to this day called “The isles of the dead (Les isles aux Morts).”¹⁴

The incident cannot be other than the 1736 engagement. While some historical details are clearly incorrect (for example, that the men were gathered on the island for religious instruction), others are accurate (the size of the party assembled and the identity of the attackers). The uncanny aspect of this account is its affinity with that of De Jaunay; the trembling and shaking of the island is close to the Jesuit’s “peal of thunder,” and the hasty flight of the attackers is identical in both narratives. New details include the aloofness of the priest from the work of death, and the assertion that the bodies were neither stripped nor scalped.

Our final account dates from 1843. In that year Père G.-A. Belcourt visited the supposed site of the killings, where his Ojibwa guide gave him an account of the events:

The Sioux ... stealthily landed on the island without attracting notice, and rushed upon the explorers who were off their guard. Many were pierced with arrows or were felled with the tomahawk. Some sought safety in flight only to perish in the waves. Father Aulneau, wounded by an arrow, fell upon his knees, when an Indian coming up behind him dealt him the death blow with his tomahawk. All the baggage was pillaged, but the Indians dared not touch the body of the missionary. Three weeks after the occurrence, a party of Indians of the Sault, passing by the spot, found his body unmutilated.¹⁵

This version seems almost a hybrid of the others. It shares with the 1736 accounts Aulneau’s kneeling posture and his arrow wound, with the letter of De Gonnor the suddenness of the attack, with the letter of De Jaunay the lone murderer, and with the narrative of Thompson the inviolability of Aulneau’s body.

To round out these accounts, we might add that in 1908 nineteen skulls and five skeletons were unearthed at the site of Fort Saint-Charles. Two of the skeletons had been placed in a box, side by side. Both were headless, and at the feet of one were placed the beads of a rosary and a set of keys.

There is little work for the historian in a search of “what really happened” on 6 June 1736. Some conjectures are certainly more probable than others, and we must respect the objective evidence of skeletal remains. But it is far less interesting to ponder what might have happened than it is to probe the *narration* of what happened.

¹⁴David Thompson Papers, MS 21, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, iv. 122.

¹⁵de Rochemonteix, *Les Jésuites et la Nouvelle-France au XVIIIe siècle*, 1:223.

The two Fort Saint-Charles accounts of 1736 place Aulneau in a subordinate role; one account speaks only of the group, while the other gives priority to Jean-Baptiste de la Vérendrye. The narratives assert that the attack on the French party was primarily a political act. As we have seen, the Dakota felt betrayed by La Vérendrye, who had broken his kinship alliance with them, first by trading arms to the Cree and then by sending his eldest son to accompany a Cree war expedition. When the opportunity arose to attack the French, and Jean-Baptiste himself, it was seized.

There is no suggestion in the 1736 accounts that Aulneau was killed *in odium fidei*, and the heads wrapped in beaver pelts speak the symbolic language of commerce rather than Christianity. Indeed, elsewhere in his writings the elder La Vérendrye betrays some peevishness with the missionary, stating on three occasions that it was at Aulneau's insistence that Jean-Baptiste was sent along with the brigade, stopping just short of accusing the Jesuit of responsibility for the death of his son. By contrast, the Jesuit letters show complete ignorance of the political and commercial realities behind the Lake of the Woods incident; instead, they suggest that Aulneau may be both a saint and a martyr. The Jesuits place particular stress on the priest's kneeling posture. Recall Père de Gonnor's comment that, upon discovering Aulneau's corpse in this position, "one of those who found him took his *calotte*, saying that, as poor as he was, he would not give it up for a thousand ecus." The collection of relics had begun.

Passages in other Jesuit letters attest to this belief in Aulneau's saintly status. In October 1738 Père Pierre de Lauzon sent the priest's *calotte* to Madame Aulneau (it is unclear how he obtained it from the voyageur who first took possession of it, but one presumes that he did not pay a thousand *écus*). De Lauzon writes "The French and Canadians wished to keep for themselves all else that belonged to him," and admits that he had clipped a small piece from the *calotte* for use in his own devotions.¹⁶ In the same year, 1738, Père Luc François Nau informed Madame Aulneau that her son was "invoked here as a powerful intercessor with God, and [that] a great many persons affirm that they have received signal graces through his intercession."¹⁷ When La Vérendrye was at last able to reach the Mandans in the winter of 1738-1739, de Gonnor wrote

¹⁶Pierre de Lauzon to Madame Aulneau, October 26, 1738. *Aulneau Collection*, 107-08.

¹⁷Luc François Nau to Madame Aulneau, October 10, 1738. *Ibid.*, 106.

a letter in which he cited the patristic maxim “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians.”¹⁸

The status accorded to Aulneau – that of saint and martyr – determined the way in which the story of his death would be narrated, and many of the features of traditional hagiography enter the tale with the Jesuits. For one, the priest becomes the central, and almost sole figure in the narrative – he approaches heroic status even before his death, and de Jaunay asserts that he even held such a fearsome group as a band of Native warriors in awe. The most remarkable element, though, must be the peal of thunder, as the natural order expresses its sympathy with human events. Both the awe of the spectators and the natural cataclysm echo details of the death of Jesus in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. In Matthew the earth shakes and rocks are split; in their terror the centurion and those keeping watch are prompted to exclaim “Truly this man was God’s Son” (Mt 27:51-54).

We should not be surprised that the story of the death of Aulneau is made to conform to such patterns in the writings of the Jesuits, who were so attuned to this kind of discourse that the scriptural echoes in their writings seem almost unconscious. But when we consider again the accounts of Thompson and Belcourt we find that the same process had been at work in the transmission of the oral tradition in the Lake of the Woods region. Thompson records that he heard the story from an “old Canadian” (that is, a French Canadian) who had himself learned it from French regime fur traders. Belcourt credits local Ojibwa. If anything, the elements of traditional hagiography are accentuated in these two relations.

The theme of disturbance in the natural order is the most striking aspect of Thompson’s account: “The rocky isle trembled and shook,” he records, and as we have seen this is not so far from de Jaunay’s “clap of thunder.” Both oral accounts insist on the awe felt by the warriors, and in both accounts this awe is linked to the inviolability of Aulneau’s body. Thompson writes that the warriors “retired without stripping the dead or taking their scalps,” and Belcourt asserts that the attackers “dared not touch the body of the missionary.” Recall that in the Gospel of John the soldiers do not break Jesus’ legs, so fulfilling the scripture “None of his bones shall be broken” (Jn 19:33, 36). Of course, the testimony of the documents of 1736, which state that the victims had all been decapitated,

¹⁸ Nicolas de Gonnor to Madame Aulneau, [1739]. *Ibid.*, 117. One may note that the items taken by the warriors – Aulneau’s seal and the portable chapel – were termed plunder, and resulted in mutilation and death; those taken by the French and Canadians were regarded as relics, which could be used in the invocation of divine aid.

and the evidence of their skeletal remains, directly contradict this version of events.

Where does this leave us? Is there a moral to this story? There are some lessons. The Aulneau narratives illustrate again how hermeneutics determine the way in which historical events are related. The Jesuit accounts of this incident, and the folk tradition with which they share so many features, are patterned along Scriptural and hagiographic lines, attesting to the power of this kind of discourse for the people of New France, whether they be those living in the bush of the interior or the educated clergy of the St. Lawrence Valley.

There are some unanswered questions. There is the uncertain relationship between the Jesuit accounts and the oral tradition, for the distinction between the two is perhaps less clear than I have suggested. De Jaunay states that he drew on oral accounts; at the same time, Jesuits continued to travel west as missionaries after 1736, and so could have informed the oral tradition in their turn. We may also consider the relationship between Native and non-Native discourses, for both de Jaunay and Belcourt credit Natives, most likely non-Christians, as their first-stage informants. Is there an affinity between the world views of the Ojibwa, Cree, Teton-Lakota, and Dakota on the one hand, and the Jesuits and fur traders on the other, that would lend rhetorical power to the Aulneau narrative in both cultures?

Finally, there is a caution for historians, to be attentive to our own modes of narration. The same rhetoric that marks the Jesuit letters and the oral tradition would later be picked up by romanticist and nationalist historians, who must have found it irresistible. In his fanciful recreation of the attack for his 1921 *Pathfinders of the Great Plains*, Burpee writes “The Jesuit priest walked up and down, deep in his breviary.”¹⁹ Irene Moore, in her 1927 biography *Valiant La Vérendrye*, writes “The missionary’s body was [found] in such a position that it was thought he was beheaded while on his knees,” and adds “perhaps pronouncing absolution for his confreres in dying.”²⁰ In her 1956 biography of La Vérendrye, Nellis Crouse writes that Aulneau “remained a horrified spectator of the scene, doubtless on his knees imploring the mercy of Heaven for his fellow countrymen.”²¹ These were all serious historians, and while we may have entered a new moment in historiography, we do well to remain self-aware about the way that we tell stories, and to acknowledge that our

¹⁹ Lawrence J. Burpee, *Pathfinders of the Great Plains : A Chronicle of La Vérendrye and His Sons* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook, 1921), 40.

²⁰ Irene Moore, *Valiant La Vérendrye*. (Quebec: L.S.-A, Proulx, 1927), 227.

²¹ Nellis M. Crouse, *La Vérendrye: Fur Trader and Explorer*. (Toronto: Ryerson, 1956), 107-108.

modes of understanding continue to determine the shape of our narratives, including that which now comes to a close.