

**Primary Source**

Letter 17th August 1816 to Earl of Bathurst from John Sherbrooke

Montreal, 17th August 1816

Sir,...It is with much concern I have to mention, that blood has been shed at the Red River, to an extent greatly to be deplored, ...

Your Excellency has been informed, that one Colin Robertson with a strong party of men in the service of the Earl of Selkirk, and the Hudson's Bay company, in March last, surprised and captured one Duncan Cameron, with the people and property of the North-West company, at some of their posts on the Lower Red River; and it now appears from the above said letter, that on the opening of the navigation this Spring, the said Colin Robertson and a party carried off the said Cameron and all the furs of the North-West company collected at the posts, with which they proceeded to the Hudson's Bay. The posts they previously destroyed.

Sometime afterwards, viz, in June, a party of Indians and half-breeds coming from the upper part of the Red River, with horses and provisions, in order to meet the North-West canoes expected from the interior, made a circuit round the Hudson's Bay company's post, at the lower part of the Red River, to avoid it, and halted about two miles below to encamp; when being observed by Mr. Semple, who styled himself governor general of that company's establishments, he ordered his people to arm and follow him. They accordingly marched out with a piece of cannon, and directed their route towards the Indian encampment. On observing this, the Indians sent one of their number on horseback to meet this party, and to explain that they came with no evil intentions and without other object than to meet the North-West canoes with provisions. Notwithstanding this assurance, Mr. Semple laid hold of the messengers horse by the bridle, took from him his ...and ordered the party to take him prisoner. The Indian threw himself from his horse, and succeeding in disengaging himself ran off to join his companions; Semple ordered him to be fired at, which he repeatedly did. By this time the other Indians came up, when one of them being wounded in the neck by a bullet, they returned the fire and rushing in upon Mr. Semple's party, put the whole, consisting of about twenty, with himself to death, except one who was wounded, and escaped in the cart which carried their ammunition.

The Indians had one killed and one wounded and immediately went to the huts of the settlers, whom they ordered to quit the country, and never more to set foot in it at the peril of their lives. They gave permission to the settlers to carry off their private effects but retained what belonged to the governor and Hudson's Bay company, which they divided.

The settlers glad to find themselves treated with such unexpected moderation after so fatal a conflict, moved off in boats to go to Hudson's Bay, in all about 130 souls. ...

The fate of the deceased is to be lamented, although brought on by a violence and imprudence reconcilable only to madness or infatuation, but it is satisfactory to consider, that no step in the power of your Excellency or predecessors could have been taken this season in time to have prevented what has happened.

(signed) J C Sherbrooke

Citation

Great Britain. Colonial Office. (1819). *Papers relating to the red river settlement [electronic resource]* : Viz. return to an address from the honourable house of commons to his royal highness the prince regent, dated 24th june, 1819 page 56-57 Retrieved

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