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""Indian Act 1876, Chapter 18, Section 62""; ""Toward a Definition of
Treason-Felony, Translated for the Cree""; ""Notes On Band Behaviour
During Rebellion""; ""Reporting on What Big Bear Said at His Trial""
""How to Hang Eight Indians (at Once) at Battleford""""Ten Steps to L-U-
N-A-T-I-C on Walls""; ""The Lunacy Commission""; ""Youa€?re a Patient
Woman, Mrs Jukes""; ""The Commissionera€?s Report""; ""To Punish"";
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""Historical Note and Acknowledgements""

Sommario/riassunto

Although relatively few First Nations joined the 1885 Mtis insurgence, the Canadian government reacted punitively, instituting draconian "Indian" policies whose ill-effects continue to resonate today. The Winter Count traces these developments alongside another narrative - the debate over the sanity of Mtis leader Louis Riel. Dilys Leman weaves original poems and reconstituted archival texts, including medical reports, diaries, treaties, recipes, even a phrenological analysis, to create a montage that both presents and disrupts official history. Her narrative questions politically expedient myths that First Nations were allies of the Mtis, would rise again in greater numbers, and needed to be scrupulously controlled to secure the opening of the West. Leman evokes the voices of historical and imagined characters to convey a political landscape teetering into lunacy and a government obsessed with its own vision of nation-building. We hear a bureaucrat extol the merits of the pass system, a court interpreter's ludicrous translation of treason felony into Cree, and Dr Augustus Jukes agonizing about his role on the secret medical commission tasked with reassessing Riel's sanity, which would determine if he could be executed. The Winter Count is a cautionary tale about moral responsibility. As Leman laments, our failure to be accountable human beings will surely haunt us: "Laudable pus / Political speeches / This water / brought too late / to a boil / Lance and forceps / rattling / their pot"
