

# UNIT 3

## The Development of the West

### IN THIS UNIT

This unit helps you investigate these questions.

- How did the fur trade affect the people, the politics, and the economy of the Northwest?
- What led to political and social unrest in western Canada in the 1870s and 1880s?
- Why was the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) a significant event in the development of Canada?
- How did geography, natural resources, and immigration play a role in the development of British Columbia?



**The CPR.** Sir John A. Macdonald's "National Dream" of building a transcontinental railway forever changed the Canadian West. It also led to the formation of Canada as we know it today. What might have happened if the CPR had not been built?



**Resistance.** The arrival of European immigrants forced the Métis to take drastic steps to protect their rights and culture. These actions helped create the province of Manitoba but ultimately led to great hardship for the Métis people. Was this clash unavoidable?



**The Métis.** The Métis are the descendants of Aboriginal women and European men. They drew on both cultures to create a unique society. How did the fur trade change the way their people interacted in the Northwest?



**Gold.** The Cariboo Gold Rush helped create the province of British Columbia, transforming the region, bringing in newcomers, and forming the basis of an economy dependent on resource exploitation. Are these consequences still seen in British Columbia today?

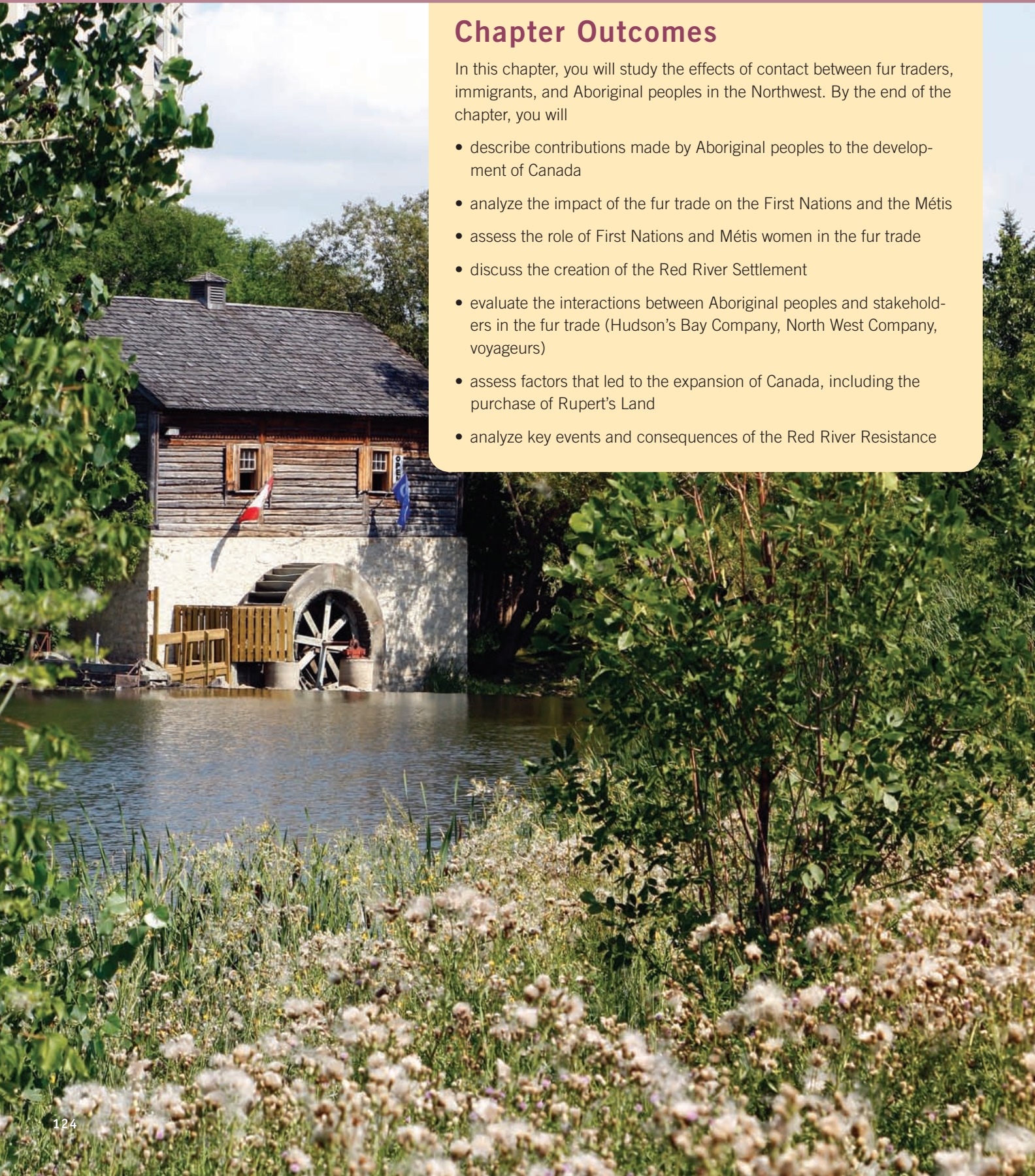
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## The Northwest

### Chapter Outcomes

In this chapter, you will study the effects of contact between fur traders, immigrants, and Aboriginal peoples in the Northwest. By the end of the chapter, you will

- describe contributions made by Aboriginal peoples to the development of Canada
- analyze the impact of the fur trade on the First Nations and the Métis
- assess the role of First Nations and Métis women in the fur trade
- discuss the creation of the Red River Settlement
- evaluate the interactions between Aboriginal peoples and stakeholders in the fur trade (Hudson's Bay Company, North West Company, voyageurs)
- assess factors that led to the expansion of Canada, including the purchase of Rupert's Land
- analyze key events and consequences of the Red River Resistance





Although the Métis were part of the Red River Settlement—and built watermills, like the one shown here—the arrival of immigrants had a profound effect on their lives. Louis Riel, whose statue (above) now stands at the Manitoba Legislature, led the Métis in their fight for recognition. How might you characterize Louis Riel? Do you think he was an inspiring leader?

## How did conflict and cooperation change the Northwest?

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the fur trade was a thriving economic activity in North America. Competition between fur-trading companies led to further exploration and exploitation of the land. The effect of this activity on the Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest would have consequences for years to come.

### Key Terms

Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)  
 Rupert's Land  
 North West Company (NWC)  
 hivernants  
 voyageur  
 bison  
 pemmican  
 Selkirk Settlement  
 free trade  
 Red River Resistance  
 provisional government

*The Métis are a creation of the country, and our history...*

—Mark McCallum, a Métis from Alberta

# The Fur Trade

## ► What were the consequences of the fur trade for the people and the land of the Northwest?

The driving force behind trade and European settlement in the Northwest was the fur trade. Trade opened up contact between First Nations and Europeans and caused exploration of the vast region. Two companies, the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, were major players in the fur trade.

### TIMELINE

- 1670** ● Founding of the HBC
- 1783** ● Founding of the NWC
- 1810** ● Métis settle in the Red River Valley
- 1812** ● Founding of the Selkirk Settlement
- 1814** ● Pemmican Proclamation
- 1816** ● Battle of Seven Oaks
- 1821** ● HBC and NWC merge
- 1869** ● Canada buys Rupert's Land
  - Red River Resistance
  - Métis List of Rights is created
- 1870** ● Execution of Thomas Scott
  - Manitoba enters Confederation

## The Hudson's Bay Company

The **Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)** was founded in 1670. Explorers Pierre-Esprit Radisson and Médard Des Groseilliers had convinced Charles II of England that with his support they could help England become competitive in the fur trade. Claiming the land surrounding Hudson Bay for England, Charles II also gave the HBC a royal charter, granting exclusive trading rights in all lands drained by rivers flowing into Hudson Bay. This territory, called **Rupert's Land**, was the size of almost one-third of modern Canada. It would be owned by the HBC for 200 years.

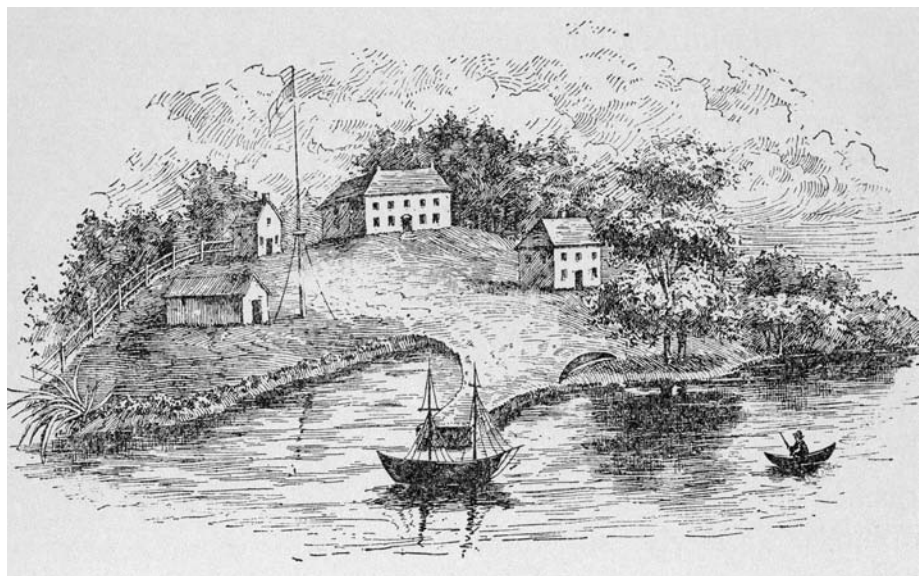
The HBC built trading posts at the mouths of rivers, on the shore of Hudson Bay. First Nations trappers and traders travelled long distances to bring their furs to the trading posts and exchanged them for trade goods. The company followed this “stay by the bay” policy for decades.

The HBC was primarily after beaver, the most valuable type of fur in the fur trade. The value of all other furs and trade goods was calculated by comparing them to the value of a beaver pelt. The HBC was strict when it came to trade, and rarely bargained.

**Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)** the oldest commercial corporation in North America; once a major player in the fur trade, it is still in business today as a department store retailer

**Rupert's Land** a territory consisting of the drainage basin of Hudson Bay

**FIGURE 4-1** York Factory, an HBC post on Hudson Bay. Find York Factory on a map. What were the advantages and disadvantages of its location?



Each summer, a ship from England delivered supplies, trade goods, and new employees to York Factory on Hudson Bay. The vessel then loaded furs for transport back to England. At first, the HBC had no direct competition, but this situation soon changed.

## The North West Company

By the mid-1700s, fur traders from New France (which later became Lower Canada) had established trading posts along rivers in the Northwest. French traders could now go deeper inland and make new contacts. First Nations traders often preferred dealing with the French, since trading with them meant not having to travel to Hudson Bay.

When the British took control of New France in 1763, the French fur trade was taken over by English merchants living in Montreal. These men continued to employ French traders. By 1783, several of the merchants had formed the **North West Company (NWC)**. This partnership put the inland trading posts under the control of one company, centred in Montreal.

In order to direct the flow of goods and furs more efficiently, the NWC built Fort William on Lake Superior. Each spring, trade goods were shipped from England to Fort William, via Montreal. From Fort William, the goods were transported by river to inland posts. In late summer, furs were transported to Montreal. Timing was critical—a round trip voyage from Fort William to the most distant NWC post could take as long as 120 days.

## Company Differences

The HBC and the NWC, rivals in the same business, were different in structure and company policy. The HBC's "stay by the bay" policy, for example, can be compared with the NWC's choice to use forts farther inland, along the rivers. Each company's success hinged on these decisions. Compare the policies outlined in the table shown on the following page.

### Did You Know...

Beaver was especially valuable in the fur trade because it was used to make expensive and trendy beaver hats.

**North West Company (NWC)** the HBC's main rival in the fur trade; based in Montreal



**FIGURE 4-2** The logo of the North West Company. Why do you think their motto would be *Perseverance*?

**hivernants** employees of the NWC who lived in the Northwest year-round

**factor** an agent who conducts business on someone's behalf

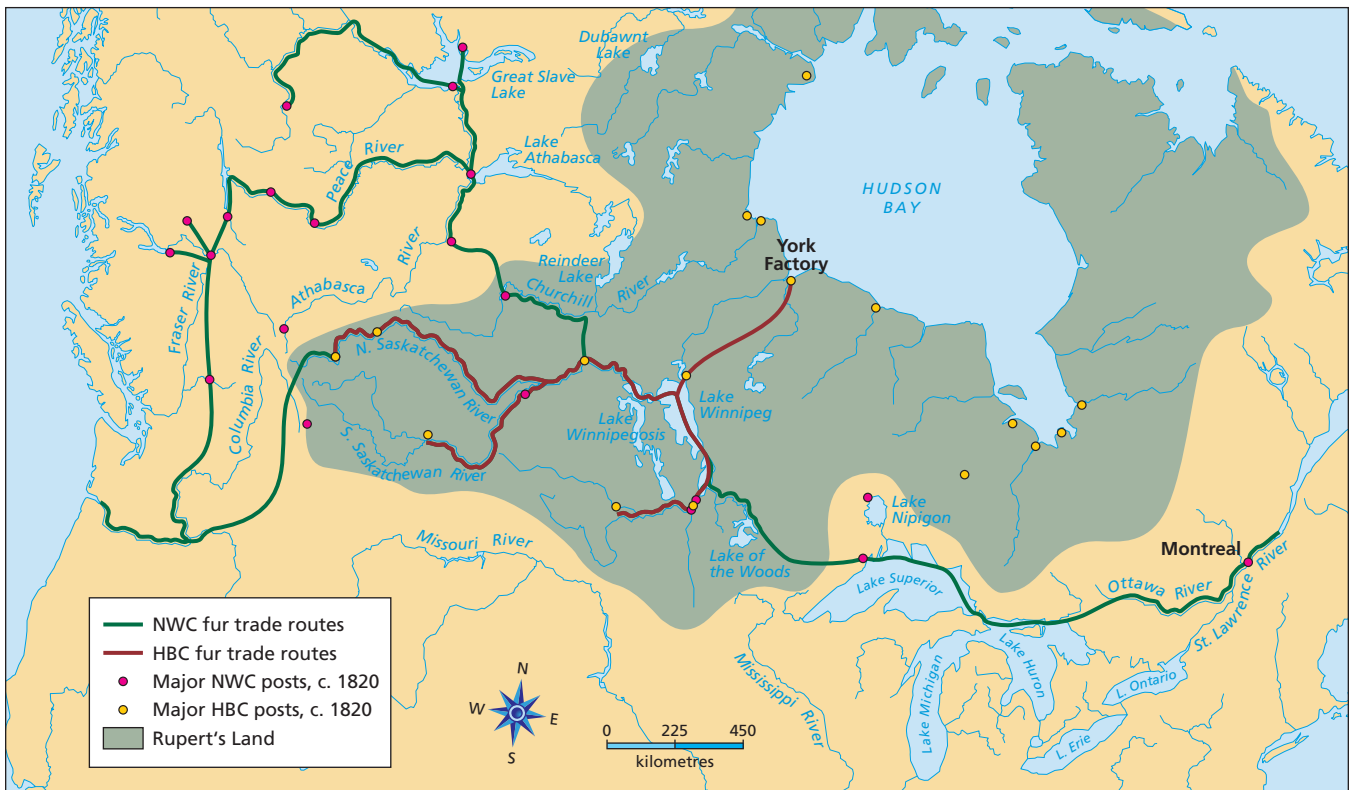
### Did You Know...

HBC factors, who ran business in the trading posts, were often from the Orkney Islands, located off the coast of northern Scotland. HBC directors considered these men to be both physically hardy and trustworthy.

### Differences Between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company

Hudson's Bay Company	North West Company	Effect
Managed from London	Managed from Montreal	New employees and instructions took longer to arrive from London
Only London directors could share in company profits	Hivernants, partners who worked in the Northwest year-round, could share in company profits	The NWC had employees in the Northwest with an added incentive to expand business
Would not bargain; would not trade alcohol	Open to bargaining; would trade alcohol	NWC was often seen as the more popular company to deal with
Held to a "stay by the bay" policy	Explored deeply into the Northwest, setting up forts along major rivers	It was easier for First Nations trappers to reach NWC trading forts
Discouraged partnerships with First Nations women; only factors were allowed to marry	Encouraged partnerships with First Nations women; all ranks were allowed to marry	Although the HBC later changed this policy, NWC traders had a social and economic advantage due to their links to First Nations

Identify what you think made each company successful.



**FIGURE 4-3** Major trading posts and routes of the HBC and NWC around 1820. Describe the geographic advantages and disadvantages each company might have had. Revisit Chapter 1 for more information on Canada's physical regions if necessary.

During the 18th and early 19th centuries, explorers and surveyors employed by the HBC and the NWC travelled throughout the Northwest. Hired to find new areas for trapping, they also kept journals and made maps.

The greatest of these explorers was David Thompson, who travelled more than 120 000 km across the Northwest during his career. At first, Thompson worked for the HBC, surveying what is now Saskatchewan. In 1797, the NWC lured him away with a hefty pay raise and the promise that he could explore and map where he chose.

In 1799, Thompson married Charlotte Small, the Métis daughter of NWC partner Peter Small. They were married for 57 years. They had 13 children, and travelled as a family on most of Thompson's expeditions.

Thompson spent the next 15 years exploring what is now British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. He mapped the relationship of the Pacific coast to the Northwest and found a route for NWC traders through the Rocky Mountains.

Thompson was a careful surveyor, using time-consuming methods to fix the location of thousands of features across the West. He used a sextant, which measures the distance between a star and the horizon, to calculate his position. All of the readings he took would be drawn on future maps. The Blackfoot First Nation called him Koo-koo-sint, which means "he who looks at the stars."

Between 1812 and 1814, Thompson transformed 25 years of observations into an enormous map of the Northwest, shown here.

Thompson resigned from the NWC in 1815. When the American border was formalized in 1818, he was chosen to survey it. However, when Thompson died in 1857, he was almost penniless and unknown.

Thompson's map of the Northwest was so accurate that it formed the basis of future maps of the region. In the 1880s, Canadian geologist Joseph Burr Tyrrell rediscovered Thompson when he found him to be the source of accurate maps of the Rockies. Tyrrell was greatly impressed and later published Thompson's journals. Today, Thompson is recognized as the best map-maker in Canadian history.

- How is a study of Thompson, his maps, and his journals useful to us today?



**FIGURE 4-4** David Thompson's original map of the Northwest is kept at the Archives of Ontario. Why is it important to maintain this type of artifact?



## Getting Around the Northwest

Exploration and trade in the Northwest meant travelling on the region's extensive system of rivers and lakes. Unfortunately, rivers do not always run in the same direction you are travelling, nor do they easily connect. Rapids and waterfalls forced **voyageurs** to **portage**, or carry, both boat and cargo on land to the next part of the river.

The North West Company used canoes adapted from those traditionally used by the First Nations. To travel from Fort William to Montreal, the NWC used the large *canot du maître*; for journeys within the Northwest, they used the slightly smaller *canot du nord*. The Hudson's Bay Company used York boats, which were based on small fishing boats developed by Orkney islanders in Scotland. They came in two sizes, and the larger boat was used on main routes.

The York boat had a number of advantages over canoes. They were sturdier than canoes and could withstand collisions with rocks or other hazards. They could also be used later in the year because they were ice-worthy. With its greater **beam** and high bow, a York boat was also steadier than a canoe. York boats could withstand sudden lake storms, which might swamp loaded canoes. The York boat also had a large sail, which increased speed and helped the crew save their energy for portages.

**voyageur** someone hired to transport goods by canoe from one trading post to another

**portage** to carry boats and goods around dangerous parts of a river

**beam** the most extreme width of a vessel, usually at the mid-point



**FIGURE 4-5** York boats photographed in the late 1880s. Why were the fur traders so reliant on water travel?

The strength of the average person who crewed either canoes or York boats was phenomenal. When portaging, an individual was expected to carry two 45-kg pieces of cargo—at a jog—over rugged ground.

*The novice who could undergo the run of the Robinson [1.5-km portage on the Hayes River] without a stop until he had conveyed 1200 pounds [545 kg] from end to end, rose to the status of a first-class tripping man.*

—John Peter Turner, “The La Loche Brigade,” *The Beaver*, December, 1943

After the merger of the HBC and NWC in 1821, canoes were generally abandoned in favour of York boats, which were used by the HBC throughout the 19th century.

Canoes and York Boats					
Vessel	Length (m)	Beam (m)	Weight (kg)	Cargo (kg)	Crew
Canot du maître	11	1.8	275	2950	11
Canot du nord	8	1.4	136	1250	5–7
Large York boat	13	3.2	1360	4500	9
Small York boat	10	2.4	900	2730	7

Which vessel would you prefer to use if you were a trader in the Northwest? Explain.

## The First Nations of the Northwest

The geography of the Northwest is predominantly defined by the Canadian Shield, which is covered by boreal forest, swift-running rivers, lakes, and muskeg. Around Hudson Bay, the forest gives way to small trees and lichen-covered rocks. In the southwest, the forest slowly changes to parkland, and then to grassy plains. This vast region is home to four major First Nations: the Cree (Nehiyaw), the Anishinabé (Ojibway), the Nakoda (Stoney), and the Dene (Chipewyan). By 1800, First Nations of the Northwest had long been involved in the fur trade as trappers, traders, and guides.

## The Impact of the Fur Trade

### Did You Know...

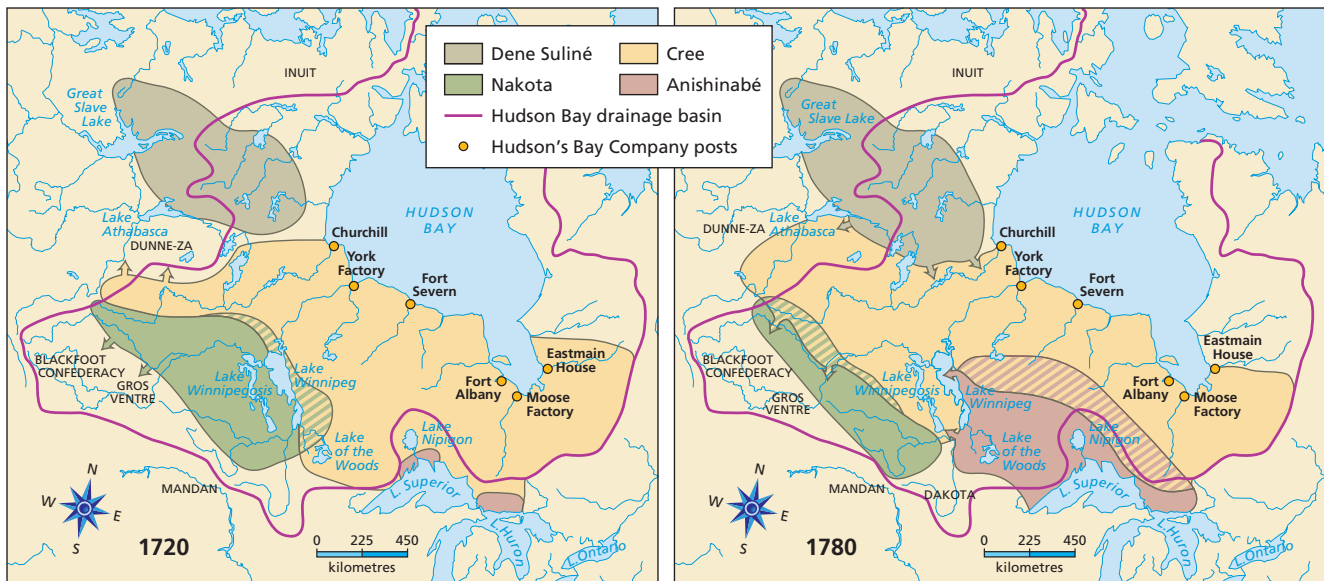
Traditionally, First Nations in the Northwest boiled food by placing hot stones in a birchbark container. The iron pot, introduced by European traders, was highly prized technology—it made heating water and food much easier.

The fur trade had a significant impact on First Nations in North America. Most First Nations became so deeply involved in the fur trade that it disrupted their way of life. As competition between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company intensified, First Nations trappers responded to the increased demand for furs by spending more time and resources on trapping. They chose to set aside parts of their yearly cycle of fishing, hunting, and preserving food, knowing that they could use the furs to buy supplies of flour, sugar, and bacon from the trading posts.

However, this practice would no longer work when local populations of fur-bearing animals were hunted to near extinction. Without furs, the money to buy supplies was also gone. Many First Nations families, facing starvation, were forced to move to new areas.

Contact with Europeans also exposed the First Nations to illnesses against which they had no immunity. The two deadliest epidemics were smallpox and measles. As you will discover in later chapters of *Horizons*, First Nations populations were frequently destroyed by epidemics. In the Northwest, the Dene and the Cree around Hudson Bay were seriously affected by disease between 1780 and 1782. One European trader noted that a First Nations community of 29 had been reduced to just three people during a single winter. Such outbreaks were devastating to cultures that survived on **oral tradition**.

**oral tradition** a way of remembering the past through stories and spoken explanation, rather than in writing, although objects to aid memory were also used



**FIGURE 4-6** These maps show the movement of some First Nations during the 18th century. As fur-bearing animals became scarce in one area, people moved elsewhere. How did such movement affect relations between different nations?

Canadians are well known for saying “eh,” and for many it has become part of their identity. What many people do not know is that the use of “eh” may be a direct result of the fur trade, which led to decades of close interaction between Aboriginal peoples and Europeans. “Eh” is a short version of *Eha*, which means “yes,” or “I agree,” in a prominent language of the fur trade—Cree.

Aboriginal peoples once formed the majority of the population in Canada, so it is not surprising that Europeans adopted some of their behaviours. In many cases, the colonists’ survival may have depended on what they learned.

Canadians are often considered to be patient and polite. Patient, reflective behaviour makes sense when you consider that people had to be patient while hunting and polite while living in close quarters over long winter months. Aboriginal children also learned to sit quietly, observe, and listen, especially when Elders were present.

Canadians are also known for their commitment to peace. While battles and conflicts occurred, the history of Canada is generally one of peaceful coexistence and compromise—especially when compared with the history of Europe or the United States. Among Aboriginal peoples, the Great Law of Peace Wampum, which is considered the first constitution drafted in the

Americas, is a document meant to establish peace. Also, vast spaces and abundant resources generally meant less competition and conflict. Significant interest in trade resulted in rules of courtesy and hospitality that can still be seen today.

The Canadian reputation for humility and generosity may have also been influenced by contact with Aboriginal cultures. Aboriginal cultures were largely non-material, with status more often determined by what was given away rather than what one

owned. While leaders emerged when they were needed, the idea of a boss was European. In fact, “chief” is not an Aboriginal word—it comes from feudal Europe.

As you have seen, many cultures have contributed to shaping Canadian identity. You have also studied the impact newcomers had on Aboriginal cultures—much of it destructive. Still, the history of interaction between Aboriginal peoples and newcomers can be seen as part of shaping Canadian identity.



**FIGURE 4–7** Canada has less than 1 percent of the world’s population, yet we have provided 10 percent of the world’s peacekeeping forces. Why do you think this is so?

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. As a class, debate the following statement: “Canadians continue to draw on many cultures to create a unique society.” Use evidence to support your arguments.



**FIGURE 4–8** This First Nations woman is drying Saskatoon berries. Why were women’s contributions to food production and transportation so vital to the fur trade?

### *Did You Know...*

One of the most important tasks for First Nations women at the fur-trading posts was to provide a steady supply of moccasins and snowshoes, the most reliable and necessary footwear for work in the Northwest.



## First Nations Women: Vital to the Fur Trade

First Nations women played important roles in the fur trade. They assisted in the collection, processing, and transportation of furs. First Nations women also provided food, medicine, clothing, and shelter, making them valuable contributors to the community’s labour force.

As First Nations entered the fur trade, the work of women became very important. For example, without women to gather pine gum to make and repair canoes, the fur trade could have come to a grinding halt.

When Europeans travelled farther into the Northwest, isolation led them to rely on First Nations’ knowledge, especially in gathering and preparing local food, making and mending clothing and shelter, and curing hides and furs. This knowledge came from First Nations women and benefited both the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company.

First Nations women also worked as guides, interpreters, and negotiators, travelling with explorers to smooth over any encounters with other First Nations. A Dene woman named Thanadelthur is remembered for her work in negotiating peace between her people and the Cree. This peaceful settlement allowed the Dene and the Cree to trade with the HBC at York Factory, an arrangement that benefited all three groups. James Knight, the factor at York Factory, wrote these words at Thanadelthur’s death:

*She was one of a very high spirit and of the firmest resolution... I am sure the death of her was a very considerable loss to the Company.*

—James Knight, York Factory, 1717

As European men began wintering in the Northwest, more and more began to marry First Nations women. Their union not only solidified trade relations between Europeans and First Nations, but it also created an entirely new people: the Métis. As time went on, First Nations women gradually found themselves replaced by the Métis women who adopted the economic and social roles they had filled with such skill.

### Did You Know...

When employees of the HBC or NWC retired from the fur trade, they often left the Northwest to return to England, Scotland, or Montreal. Most left their “country wives” and children behind.

## Get to the Source • Your Honours’ Employees

The skills that First Nations women brought to the fur trade were not lost on the European fur traders. This defence of the work of First Nations women appeared in a letter sent to the London Committee of the HBC, which resisted paying for the clothing of their employees’ wives.

- Why were the traditional roles of First Nations women so important to the fur trade?

*...the women are deserving of some encouragement from your Honors. They clean and put into a state of preservation all beaver and otter skins brought [in] undried and in bad condition. They prepare line for snowshoes and knit them also without which your [employees] could not give efficient opposition to the Canadian [NWC] traders. They make leather shoes for the men who are obliged to travel... and are useful in a variety of other instances; in short they are virtually your Honors’ [employees].*

—York Factory Council, 1802

## ACTIVITIES

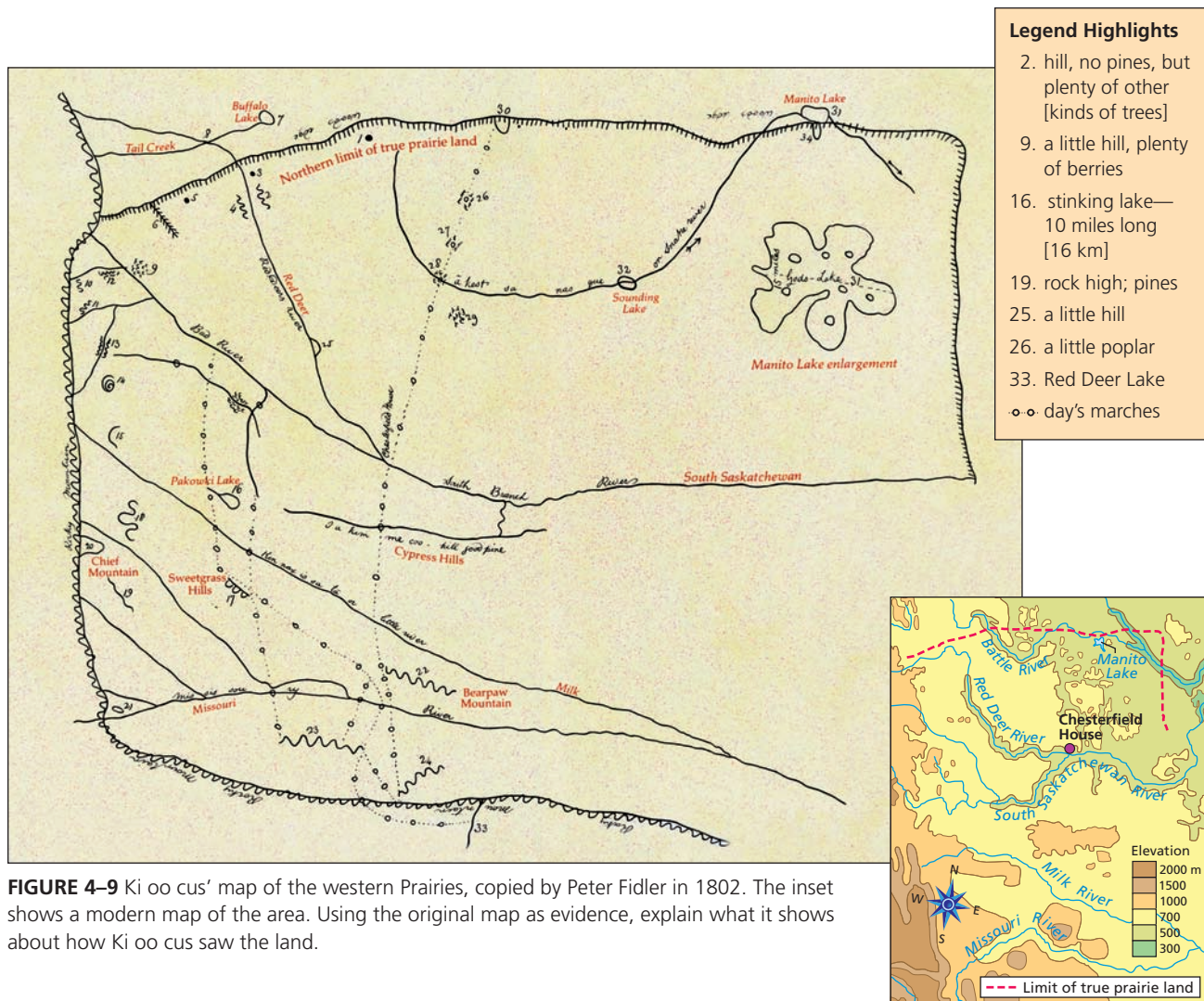
1. Discuss the differences between the Hudson’s Bay Company and the North West Company. Use a T-chart to contrast and compare the companies. Which one do you think was the better organization? Why?
2. The fur trade could not have existed without the contributions of the First Nations and the Métis. Evaluate this statement, giving reasons for your answer.
3. Identify the positive and negative impacts of the fur trade on the First Nations and the Métis. Select what you believe to be the greatest impact (either positive or negative) and explain your thinking.
4. Discuss how the activities of the fur trade might have brought an increased level of conflict between various First Nations.

# SKILLBUILDER • Using a Mind Map

The traditional view of the first European explorers who travelled to a previously unvisited part of North America is that they were “boldly going where no one had gone before.” This view, of course, is not accurate, as

Aboriginal peoples had already been living in these areas for thousands of years. In fact, explorers relied heavily on Aboriginal peoples as guides and translators throughout North America. In the Northwest, First Nations’

knowledge about the land was extensive and valuable. Not only did First Nations have detailed knowledge of the region’s topography, they also knew where valuable resources, such as food and water, could be found.



**FIGURE 4–9** Ki o o cus’ map of the western Prairies, copied by Peter Fidler in 1802. The inset shows a modern map of the area. Using the original map as evidence, explain what it shows about how Ki o o cus saw the land.

The map shown here was drawn by Peter Fidler, an HBC trader and explorer in 1802, but it was based on a sketch by Ki oo cus (Little Bear), a Siksika chief. It shows the topographic features of the central region of what is now Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the northern United States. This is what geographers call a “mind map.” It shares information about a cultural landscape, as described in Chapter 1.

The purpose of a mind map is to recall important places, their relative distance, why a location may be important, and any significant features of the terrain (a swift-flowing river or particularly rugged landscape, for instance). For example, Ki oo cus notes the location of important berry bushes (an excellent source of “trail food”). This map is one of several adapted by Fidler, who used them as the basis of his own maps of the area.

The region shown on this map was not formally mapped until 1865, when explorers from the Palliser Expedition published their map of Canada from Lake Superior to the Okanagan Valley. Their map confirmed that most of Ki oo cus’ information—although collected without any mapping technology—was accurate.

## APPLY IT

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1. What physical features does Ki oo cus include on the map? Why are these features important? Why include berry patches on the map?
2. Provide three reasons fur traders would find Ki oo cus’ map useful.
3. Use your memory to create your own mind map of the area near your home and school. Include these key locations:
  - your house
  - your school
  - main roads

- bus stops (if you use public transportation)
- places where you shop, and stores where you buy food
- where you work (if you have a part-time job)

Now add other locations that are important to you. For example, the houses of friends and relatives, a park you like to visit, or landmarks you feel are special. Anything else that is important to you and your life can be considered part of this cultural landscape.



# The Northwest from 1800 to 1860

## ► How did life in the Northwest change between 1800 and 1860?

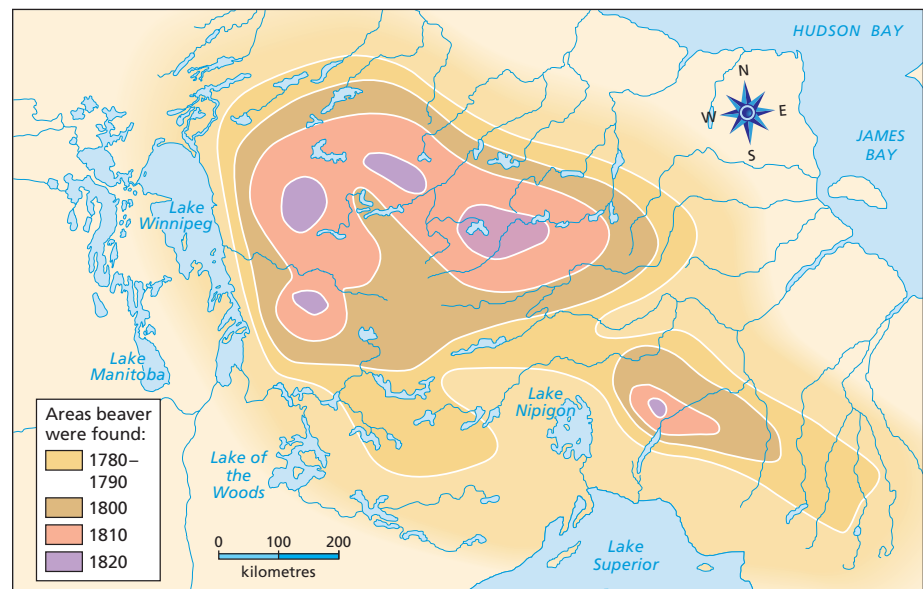
In the early 1800s, competition between the NWC and the HBC became intense. Fur resources were becoming dangerously depleted, and fur traders were spreading out across the Rocky Mountains and into the North. Both companies set aside their standards of trade in an effort to undercut one another. By 1820, both the HBC and the NWC were nearly bankrupt.

## The Métis

French-Canadian fur traders had been spending winters in the Northwest from as early as the mid-1700s. They commonly spent the season with local First Nations, and eventually traders began marrying the daughters of local First Nations families. This practice was encouraged and accepted, as First Nations women generally had free choice in whom they were to marry. As well as creating social connections, the marriages also firmed loyalty and economic ties between the traders and the First Nations with whom they worked. Also, as you have seen, First Nations women brought valuable skills and knowledge that proved vital to the European traders and to the fur trade itself.

### Did You Know...

The intense trade of beaver fur eventually waned as beaver hats became less popular and the population of beaver decreased. Although the beaver is considered an important symbol of Canada's history, efforts to protect the beaver did not begin until the late 1930s, when the writings of Grey Owl became popular. Today, the beaver population in Canada is considered healthy. Problems now stem from beavers' natural dam-building activities damaging farmland, roads, and forests.



**FIGURE 4-10** This map shows the depletion of beaver in part of the Northwest. How do you think the depletion of beaver affected the First Nations in the area?

Marriage to a trader was not a simple choice for First Nations women, however. While the wives of fur traders might have enjoyed an improved standard of living, they had to leave their families and live in the fur-trading posts. They could be separated from family for years at a time.

The NWC did not oppose the marriages. In fact, the weddings were important social events, carried out *à la façon du pays*—in the custom of the country. In contrast, the HBC did not approve of such marriages. The company felt that too many dependants would be a drain on its finances. In fact, the HBC initially tried to impose a policy of **celibacy** on its employees, but the remote location of the Northwest meant that this policy could never really be enforced. By the end of the 18th century, most HBC employees had also taken First Nations wives.

## Children of the Fur Trade

A growing number of people in the Northwest were children of European fur traders and First Nations women. Belonging completely to neither parent's culture, they were, in effect, the children of the fur trade. A new culture soon evolved—something entirely unique to Canada.

By about 1810, those of French-Canadian and First Nations descent were calling themselves Métis (from the French word for “mixed”). They spoke a distinct language called Michif, made up of French nouns and Cree verbs. Some Nakoda, Saukteaux, and Anishinabé words are also found in Michif. This language is still spoken by some Métis today, and efforts are being made to keep the language alive.

Other Métis had either Scottish or English and First Nations ancestry. They spoke a now extinct language called Bungee. Similar to Michif, Bungee combined English and Gaelic with Cree and other First Nations languages.

Those with British and First Nations ancestry initially preferred the term “country born,” but gradually they became known as English- or Anglo-Métis. Today, any person of European and First Nations ancestry is considered to be Métis.

## Settling at Red River

By 1810, a large number of Métis had settled in the Red River Valley, near the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, in what is now southern Manitoba. Here they developed a way of life that was a unique combination of First Nations and European traditions.

### Did You Know...

*À la façon du pays* also meant being married without the presence of clergy. Unless the ceremony was repeated later with a member of the clergy, it was not technically legal. As a result, many women were left behind by their husbands when the men left the Northwest.

**celibacy** refraining from sexual relations



**FIGURE 4-11** A Métis family in southern Alberta, 1890. Look closely at this photo, especially at what this family is wearing. What evidence does this photo provide about the merging of two cultures?

## WEB LINK

For more information about the Métis in Canada, visit the Pearson Web site.

**bison** also called buffalo; large grazing animals that travel in herds

**pemmican** dried meat pounded to a paste and mixed with melted fat and berries

**Red River carts** two-wheeled carts used on the Prairies

**buffalo runners** small horses specially trained to be used during the buffalo hunt

The Red River Valley consists of some of the best farming land on the Prairies, and the Métis established farms along the banks of both rivers. Their farms were laid out in the French-Canadian style, in long narrow lots starting at the riverbank. Behind the river lots was an area called the “hay privilege,” where a farmer could grow hay. The Métis also hunted **bison**, and by 1820, the bison hunt had become a central part of Métis life.

## The Bison Hunt

The bison hunt usually took place in the summer and early autumn. Bison provided meat and hides. Most of the meat was dried to make **pemmican**, while the hides were tanned and made into buffalo robes. Robes and pemmican were sold to the North West Company. Pemmican was high in calories and protein, and could be stored in leather bags for years at a time. It was also portable, much like protein bars available today. The pemmican trade was vital to both the Métis and the NWC, as it provided income for the Métis and an important source of food for the long voyages of the NWC traders.

The bison hunt was an important event that involved the entire community. Métis women, men, and children set off across the Prairie in search of bison. Women and children drove the **Red River carts**, pulled by horses and oxen and used to transport the meat. Hunters rode **buffalo runners**—horses with speed and agility specially trained for the hunts.



**FIGURE 4–12** This watercolour sketch of a Métis bison hunt is by artist Paul Kane, who travelled and lived with the Métis in 1846. Was it common for artists at that time to live and work among the subjects of their paintings? What advantage would this bring?

The Red River cart was a means of transportation unique to the Northwest. It was built with simple hand tools and was made entirely of wood. It had just one axle, two large wheels, and a wooden box for carrying both people and goods. It was sturdy and could carry up to 500 kg.

Red River carts were pulled by either oxen or horses. Oxen were usually preferred because although they were slower, they could pull more weight. Because of the dusty prairie summer, the axles were never greased, which resulted in an incredible amount of noise as the wheels turned. According to one European immigrant, the noise was both distinctive and uncomfortable:

*Combine all the discordant sounds ever heard in Ontario and they cannot produce anything so horrid as a train of Red River carts. At each turn of the wheel, they run up and down all the notes of the scale without sounding distinctly any note or giving one harmonious sound.*

If the Métis were moving in a large group, the carts would travel side by side in order to avoid the dust created by the movement of the carts. A group of carts could stretch across 10 km. With thoroughfares so wide, imagine the effect on the cultural landscape of prairie towns. The widest street in Canada is Main Street in Winnipeg, which was built to accommodate 10 Red River carts travelling side by side.

- If the carts were so noisy and the journey so uncomfortable, why do you think people continued to use them? What do you think eventually made them obsolete?

**WEB LINK** ● .....  
On the Pearson Web site, watch a video of a modern Métis journey using Red River carts.



**FIGURE 4-13** This painting by Paul Kane shows a Métis cart brigade travelling across the prairie. Discuss how the formation of farms, towns, and cities might affect Métis travel.



**FIGURE 4-14** A photo of Main Street, Winnipeg, in 1879. Why would such a wide street be unusual in a town or city?

## Did You Know...

Until the 1860s, all rifles were muzzle loaders requiring the manual loading of gunpowder and a lead shot, and the priming of the ignition chamber. Most muzzle loaders weighed at least 10 kg. The Métis hunters had the ability to load, fire, and reload these weapons while on horseback, surrounded by stampeding bison!

**muzzle loaders** any firearm loaded through the muzzle (open end of a firearm)

The Métis hunters and their buffalo runners were so well practised that they acted together. Hunters directed the horses using their knees, which kept their hands free to use their rifles. The rifles were **muzzle loaders**, and the bravery and skill of the Métis hunters were admired by many 19th-century observers of the bison hunt. The hunt itself was extremely dangerous—guns could misfire, horses could trip and fall, and the bison could be aggressive. Death and serious injury were common. Once enough bison had been killed, everyone helped butcher the meat. The entire hunting party then returned to the Red River Valley and held a well-earned celebration.

During the hunt, the Métis sometimes came into conflict with the First Nations who also hunted bison, such as the Blackfoot and the Lakota. In 1851, 64 Métis bison hunters were overtaken by a group of about 2000 Lakota. The Métis circled their carts in a defensive formation, dug rifle pits, and held off charge after charge in a three-day battle. In the end, the Lakota retreated, vowing never to attack “the wagonmen” again.

The bison hunt did more for the Métis than supply meat and clothing; it fostered a strong sense of community, pride, and discipline.

## Get to the Source • The Laws of the Bison Hunt



The Métis developed rules for the bison hunt. These rules were so strictly enforced that a hunt could be seen as a military expedition. The Captain of the Hunt, who was elected by the hunters before the party left Red River, had absolute authority during the hunt.

### The Laws of the Hunt

1. No buffalo to be run on the Sabbath Day [Sunday].
2. No party to fork off, lag behind, or go before, without permission [from the Captain of the Hunt].
3. No person or party to run buffalo before the general order.
4. Every captain with his men, in turn, to patrol the camp and keep order.
5. For the first trespass [violation] against these laws, the offender to have his saddle and bridle cut up.
6. For the second offence, the coat to be taken off the offender's back, and be cut up.
7. For the third offence, the offender to be flogged.
8. Any person convicted of theft, even to the value of a sinew, to be brought to the middle of the camp, and the crier to call out his or her name three times, adding the word “Thief” each time.

- What do these rules tell us about the bison hunt? What do they show about the Métis?
- What information is missing? What other questions could be asked to gain more information?

## ACTIVITIES

1. Summarize the main reasons why the Métis established a farming community in the Red River Valley.
2. Identify and examine several reasons that explain why the bison hunt was so important to the Métis.

# The Selkirk Settlement

## ► How did European colonists come to live in the Red River Valley, and what changes did they bring?

In 1812, European colonists arrived where the Red and Assiniboine Rivers meet, where Winnipeg, Manitoba, is today. This event would have profound implications for the Hudson's Bay Company, the North West Company, and the Métis.

### The Earl of Selkirk

Thomas Douglas, the fifth Earl of Selkirk, was a man of vision. A **liberal democrat**, Selkirk was troubled by the plight of poor tenant farmers in his native Scotland. He was determined to help them, and because he was very wealthy, he had the means to do so.

Near the end of the 1700s, many landowners in Scotland began evicting their tenant farmers. They wanted to convert the land occupied by tenants to pasture for sheep, since wool brought in more money than the rent paid by the tenants. The displaced tenant farmers had two choices: they could migrate to cities like Glasgow and become factory workers, or they could emigrate to British North America and become farmers.

Most tenant farmers were far too poor to make the journey across the Atlantic. It was these people Lord Selkirk wanted to help by creating agricultural colonies in British North America. By 1810, Selkirk had established colonies in Prince Edward Island and Upper Canada. Since Selkirk was also one of the directors of the HBC, he then decided to use his influence to launch a far more ambitious project in the Northwest.

**liberal democrat** in the 19th century, someone who fought for the rights of the poor and underprivileged

### Did You Know...

Selkirk campaigned vigorously before the British government to sell his idea of establishing colonies in British North America. He also wanted to help Irish farmers. In 1805 he wrote and published a book to promote his theories.



**FIGURE 4-15** A family of tenant farmers is driven from their home in Scotland. What parallels can be drawn between this family's experience and that of the First Nations pushed aside by European settlement in Upper and Lower Canada? What impact do you think a European colony in the Northwest might have on the Métis?

## Choosing the Red River Valley

Selkirk had learned that the soil of the Red River Valley was especially fertile. He also knew that it was expensive for the HBC to ship food and other supplies from England to its employees in the Northwest. Selkirk felt he could help both the tenant farmers and the HBC by creating a farming colony, the **Selkirk Settlement**, in the Red River Valley. The farmers would be able to maintain their way of life in a new land, and the HBC would have a source of farm products to supply its operations.

In 1811, Selkirk convinced the HBC to grant him 300 000 square kilometres in what is now southern Manitoba and North Dakota. Selkirk and the HBC felt they had a legal right to this territory because it was part of Rupert's Land. Neither gave much thought to the people already living in the region, and how they might react to the arrival of colonists.

In 1811, 36 Scottish and Irish labourers left Britain under the command of an ex-militia officer named Miles Macdonell. Their job was to travel to the Selkirk Grant to find a suitable spot for the colonists. However, they arrived at York Factory in late summer and were forced to spend the winter there. They did not arrive at Red River until the end of August 1812. Only two months later, more than 100 men, women, and children arrived. They were forced to seek shelter at Fort Pembina, surviving on local supplies of pemmican.

**Selkirk Settlement** also called the Red River Colony; a settlement organized by the Earl of Selkirk in what is now southern Manitoba

### Did You Know...

Selkirk conducted extensive research for his newest settlement, but he failed to consider the difficult climate of the Northwest, which was far harsher than that of Scotland.



**FIGURE 4-16** The Selkirk Grant. Use an atlas to find out what this area is like today and what it is used for. Why did Selkirk choose this area for his settlement?

In the spring, Macdonell led the group back to the Red River Valley. They cleared the land and planted crops, but the harvest failed, and the colonists were forced to spend a second winter at Fort Pembina. In the meantime, a second group of 83 colonists had landed at Fort Churchill. They marched in winter to York Factory, a journey that brought them to the brink of death. This group did not reach the colony until the spring of 1814.

## The Pemmican Proclamation

Miles Macdonell, fearing that crops might fail for a second year, issued the **Pemmican Proclamation** in January 1814. It effectively banned the sale and export of pemmican from the Red River Valley for one year. This ban was meant to protect the colonists from starvation, but it was a blow to the Métis of the area, who made a living from the pemmican trade. The Métis were infuriated. The NWC, which already saw the Selkirk Settlement as part of an HBC plot to drive its employees from the area, relied on pemmican to supply its fur traders. The company was equally outraged.

The Pemmican Proclamation actually ran contrary to Selkirk's instructions not to interfere with the operations of the NWC. Macdonell, already disobedient, then attempted to force NWC employees out of the Red River Valley.

## The North West Company Strikes Back

In the summer of 1814, the NWC ordered two of its employees, Alexander Macdonell and Duncan Cameron, to drive the British colonists away. Cameron enlisted the Métis to carry out the NWC directive and appointed Cuthbert Grant as Captain of the Métis. The NWC and the Métis harassed the colonists, burning buildings, destroying crops, and firing rifles at night. By early 1815, more than 100 colonists had left, and Miles Macdonell was arrested. They were taken to Fort William on Lake Superior. Soon after, the remaining colonists left for Norway House at the north end of Lake Winnipeg.

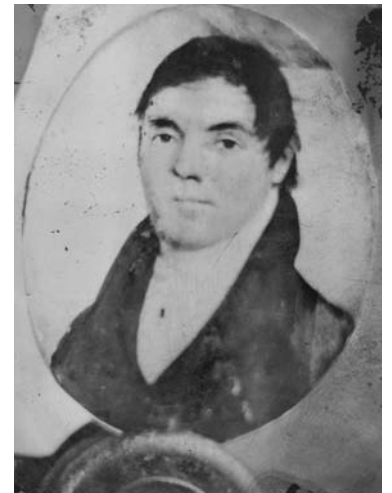
Alexander Macdonell saw that in acting against the Red River colonists, the Métis were inspired to recognize their rights and fight for their land. He wrote:

*The new nation under their leaders are coming forward to clear their native soil of intruders and assassins.*

—Alexander Macdonell, NWC employee

This new sense of identity had a profound effect on the Métis and later changed the course of history for the Northwest.

**Pemmican Proclamation** issued in 1814 to prevent the export of pemmican from the Red River Valley



**FIGURE 4–17** Cuthbert Grant was an important leader of the Métis. He later became a sheriff and magistrate in the region. Why did the North West Company turn to him for help in the Red River Valley?



## The Battle of Seven Oaks

Colin Robertson, an HBC factor, led the British colonists back to the Red River Valley within the year. Robertson set out to make peace with the NWC and the Métis until Robert Semple, a new governor for the colony, could arrive. When Semple came with 84 new colonists, Robertson warned him to cooperate with the NWC and the Métis. Unfortunately, Semple ignored Robertson, and he ordered the burning of Fort Gibraltar, an empty NWC post. The Métis saw this as a sign that the colonists intended to make war.

In May 1816, a party of Métis led by Cuthbert Grant raided several HBC York boats on the Assiniboine River. A large supply of pemmican was taken. Grant decided to move the pemmican to Lake Winnipeg, where they could supply the NWC fur traders. Grant meant to avoid the Red River colony, but on June 19 they were seen by a lookout at Fort Douglas.

Robert Semple and 28 men rode out to confront the Métis. The Métis quickly split into two groups and surrounded Semple and his men, a move that Semple failed to notice. An attempt at a **parley** by Grant failed when angry words were exchanged and a colonist fired at the Métis. A gunfight began, and within 15 minutes it was over. Semple and 20 of his men were killed; one Métis died. This skirmish became known as the Battle of Seven Oaks, but the Métis refer to it as the Victory at Frog Plain. It is considered by some Métis historians as a defining moment in Métis history.

**parley** a discussion under truce, sometimes to discuss peaceful alternatives to battle



**FIGURE 4–18** This depiction of the Battle of Seven Oaks was painted by Canadian artist C.W. Jefferys in 1914. It shows Semple (the white-haired man) and his men confronting the Métis. In what ways do you think this painting is accurate? How might it be inaccurate?

Cuthbert Grant ordered that the remaining colonists be allowed to leave Red River without harm, and they again retreated to Norway House. At the same time, Lord Selkirk was travelling west to visit the colony. He brought 100 Swiss mercenaries with him as a protective force. On the way, he was told about the Battle of Seven Oaks. Selkirk quickly moved west and seized the NWC post of Fort William. He then descended on the Red River Valley and took control of the area. Promised protection by the Swiss soldiers, the colonists once again returned to the settlement.

The following spring, in 1817, Selkirk negotiated a treaty with the local Anishinabé and Cree Nations to lease the land along both the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. He distributed the land among the colonists, and promised that a church and school would soon be built. By the time Selkirk left the Red River Valley, he believed he had left the colony at peace.

Selkirk also thought he had settled matters with the NWC. He was wrong. When he returned to England, he was confronted by lawsuits filed against him and his employees, and for the next three years, he waged a costly court battle. Selkirk died in the spring of 1820, just short of his 49th birthday.

**WEB LINK** ● .....  
Read more about the life and legacy of Cuthbert Grant on the Pearson Web site.

## Zoom In ➤ Cuthbert Grant



Significance

The first acknowledged leader of the Métis was Cuthbert Grant, who became instrumental in giving the Métis a sense of identity. Grant was born in 1793 at Fort Tremblant, a NWC trading post. His mother was Métis, and his father was a Scottish trader. As a boy, Grant was sent to school in Montreal. He returned to the Northwest in 1812 and worked as a clerk for the NWC. Fluent in both English and French, he was later made Captain of the Métis.

Grant was polite, soft-spoken, and very persuasive. By the time George Simpson arrived at Red River in 1821, Grant was the settlement's most prominent citizen. As the new head of the HBC, Simpson appointed Grant Warden

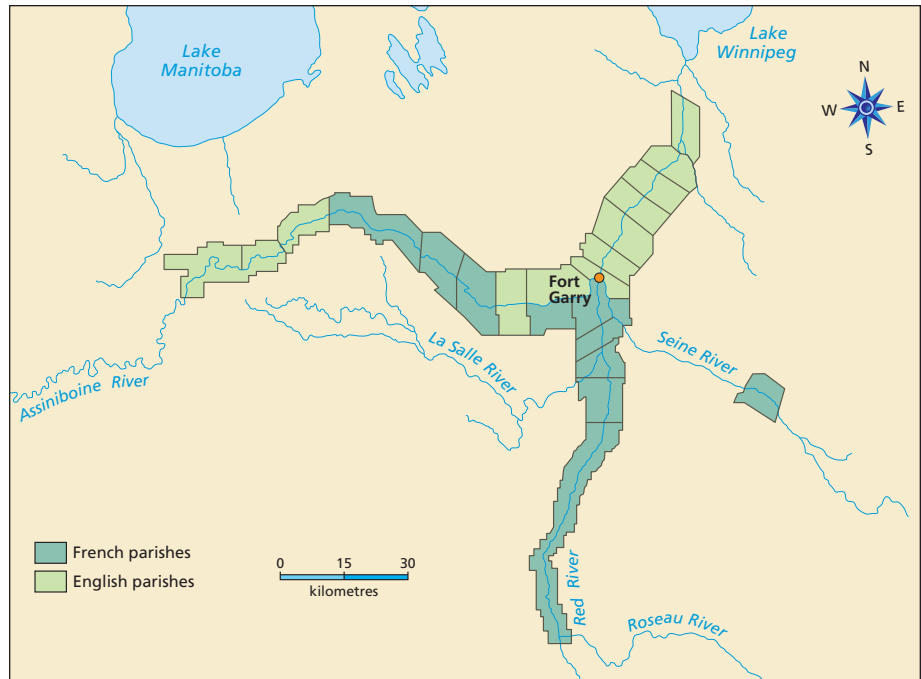
of the Plains, a post that carried an annual salary of £200 and a sizeable land grant. In this position, Grant was expected to enforce the HBC's rules among the Métis, a job he tactfully carried out for 20 years.

When he realized that the new boundary with the United States would cut off a group of Métis from the rest of the settlement, Grant convinced more than 100 Métis families to resettle in the northern part of the valley. Where they settled would eventually be called Grantown.

Grant used his medical knowledge to help people, allowed his home to be used as a school, and was both magistrate and sheriff for the area.

When American settlers were moving into the territory south of the 49th parallel in the 1840s, HBC rules prevented the Métis from trading with them. Grant's continued enforcement of these rules weakened his position with younger Métis. In 1849, he retired to his farm. He died in 1854.

- Why is Grant historically significant? What can we learn from his experiences and his decisions that will help us understand this period?



**FIGURE 4-19** By 1870, the Red River Settlement had been divided into sections called parishes, based on language. Why do you think the settlement developed in this pattern?

## The Merger of the HBC and NWC

The conflict in the Red River Valley was part of a larger struggle between the HBC and the NWC for control of the fur trade. By 1820, this struggle had brought both companies to the verge of bankruptcy. There were simply not enough furs in the Northwest to justify full-scale operations by

two rival companies. In 1821, the British government, which feared loss of control of the Northwest if both companies failed, forced the HBC and the NWC to agree to a merger of their two companies.

A new company was formed, under the name of the Hudson's Bay Company, with 100 shares. The NWC partners received 55 shares, and the HBC directors received 45 shares. The British Parliament gave the new company control over Rupert's Land and upheld the trading monopoly enjoyed by the old HBC. In fact, new legislation extended both the land grant and trading monopoly west of the Rocky Mountains and north to the Arctic Ocean. The new HBC now controlled more than 7 million square kilometres—over half of what is now Canada.



**FIGURE 4-20** After the merger, the new HBC began expanding into the area west of the Rocky Mountains. Fort St. John, shown here, was renamed by the HBC in 1821 and operated for another two years. What challenges were faced by traders working west of the Rockies?

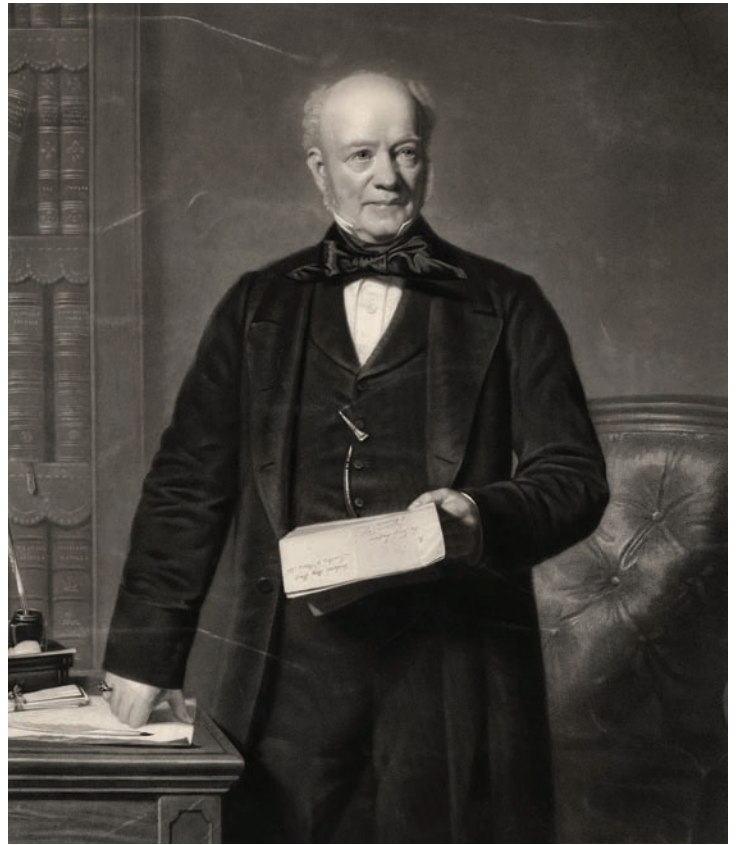
## Changes in Organization

Because the direct route from York Factory to England via Hudson Bay was cheaper, the Fort William to Montreal route was abandoned, and York boats were adopted as the main means of transportation. The new HBC also drastically reduced the number of trading posts and employees.

The company now increasingly relied on First Nations and Métis to support its operations. The Métis became the primary suppliers of pemmican and labour to the HBC, while First Nations were employed as trappers, translators, guides, and map-makers.

The HBC also appointed a new head of operations for North America. The man they selected was George Simpson, a Scottish sugar broker. Simpson did not know much about furs and knew less about the Northwest, but he did know how to run a company. In 1820, in his early thirties, he was named Governor-in-Chief of the HBC. He ran the company for the next 40 years.

Simpson was a dynamic man and a hands-on manager. He refused to run the HBC from behind a desk in Montreal. Between 1821 and 1829, Simpson criss-crossed Rupert's Land from Hudson Bay to the Pacific Coast. Typically, he set off by canoe in the spring and spent the summer and autumn visiting as many trading posts as he could. Simpson preferred to arrive without warning and spent hours grilling traders and factors.



**FIGURE 4-21** George Simpson in 1857. When visiting trading posts, Simpson dressed formally and entered the post to the music of a bagpiper. Why do you think he might have chosen to present himself this way?

## ACTIVITIES

1. Describe how European settlement had an impact on the Métis. Identify two or three main ideas with supporting details that explain and support your response.
2. Lord Selkirk has been called an “unrealistic idealist.” Find evidence to support or refute this claim and discuss your views with a partner.
3. Was the conflict over Selkirk's Red River Settlement inevitable? Provide reasons for your answer.

### Patterns and Change

4. How could the Battle of Seven Oaks be seen as a turning point in Métis history?
5. How could the merger of the HBC and the NWC be seen as a turning point in the history of the Northwest?

### March 15

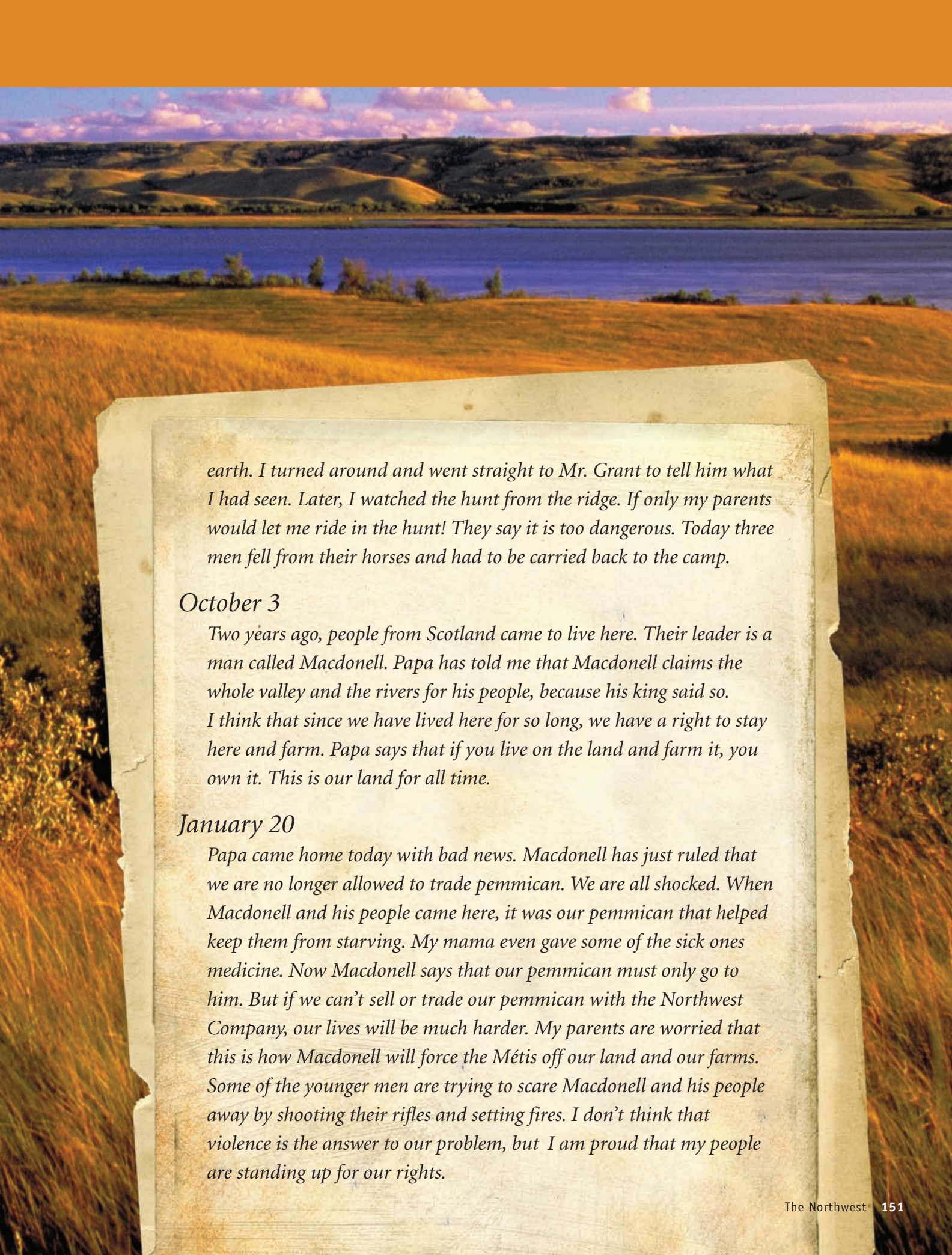
*I am keeping these stories to show to my children when I am old. My nohkom tells us stories from her childhood so we can learn about her people. I would like my children and their children to read my stories. I am Marie Garneau, and I am 17 years old. I live on a farm with my mother and father. We are Métis. Both of my grandfathers were French traders for the North West Company. My father's mother, my nohkom, is Saulteaux, and my mother's mother was Cree. I have two younger brothers. My uncle has taught all of us to read and write, and the paper that I write on is a special gift from him!*

### March 26

*I should tell you about where we live. Our farm is long and narrow, and stretches back from the Red River. We have neighbours on either side—the Levines and the Cardinals. We grow vegetables and keep chickens and cows. We all work hard on the farm. I milk the cows, even in the winter, when my hands get as cold as ice. Sometimes my parents also find work with the North West Company. We hunt bison twice every year, in the spring and the fall. The bison hunt is the biggest event of the year and involves our whole village—even women and children. We load up the carts with enough supplies for three weeks. The carts are so noisy that sometimes I think the bison will hear us coming!*

### May 20

*Today I was riding with the men, away from the camp to look for bison. Suddenly I heard a noise like thunder. Bison! I rode quickly up to the crest of a hill so I could see them. There were so many—a herd that stretched as far as I could see, right up to where the sky met the*



*earth. I turned around and went straight to Mr. Grant to tell him what I had seen. Later, I watched the hunt from the ridge. If only my parents would let me ride in the hunt! They say it is too dangerous. Today three men fell from their horses and had to be carried back to the camp.*

### *October 3*

*Two years ago, people from Scotland came to live here. Their leader is a man called Macdonell. Papa has told me that Macdonell claims the whole valley and the rivers for his people, because his king said so. I think that since we have lived here for so long, we have a right to stay here and farm. Papa says that if you live on the land and farm it, you own it. This is our land for all time.*

### *January 20*

*Papa came home today with bad news. Macdonell has just ruled that we are no longer allowed to trade pemmican. We are all shocked. When Macdonell and his people came here, it was our pemmican that helped keep them from starving. My mama even gave some of the sick ones medicine. Now Macdonell says that our pemmican must only go to him. But if we can't sell or trade our pemmican with the Northwest Company, our lives will be much harder. My parents are worried that this is how Macdonell will force the Métis off our land and our farms. Some of the younger men are trying to scare Macdonell and his people away by shooting their rifles and setting fires. I don't think that violence is the answer to our problem, but I am proud that my people are standing up for our rights.*

# The Red River Valley: 1821–1860

## ► Did the settlement in the Red River Valley develop and thrive, or did it return to conflict?

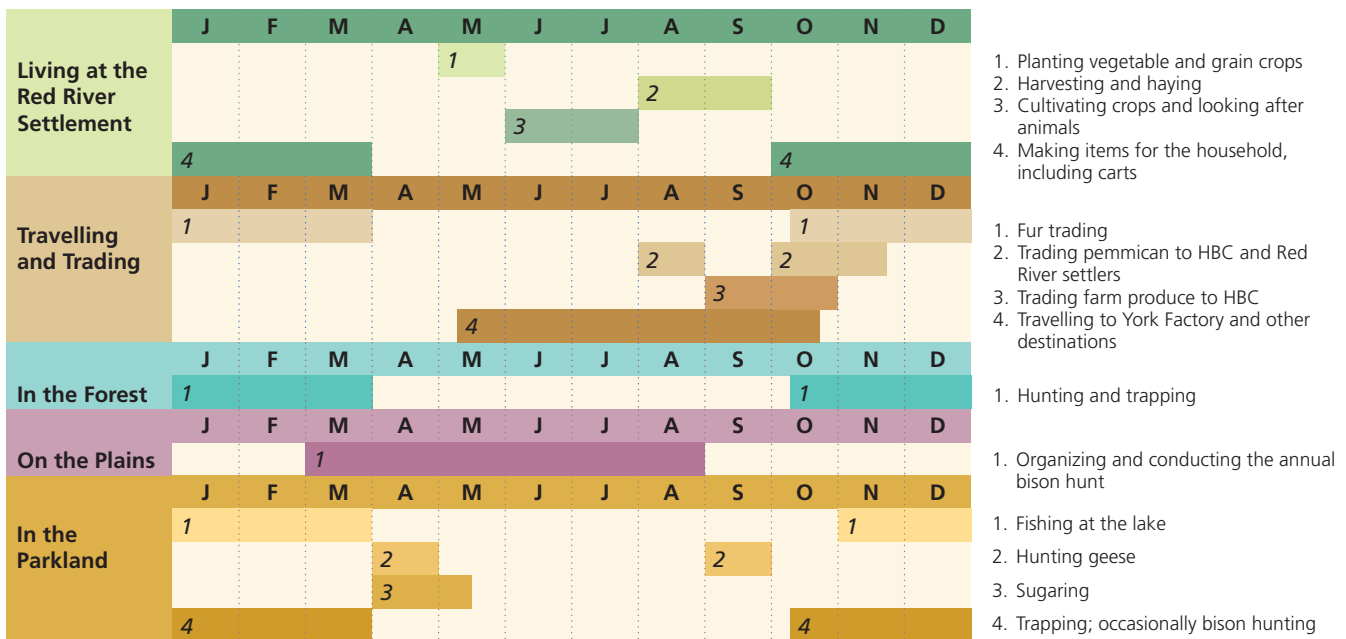
### Did You Know...

The value of Métis economic activities was greater than all other activities in the Red River Settlement combined.

By 1821, peace had come to the Red River Valley. For the next 40 years, the settlement developed into a stable, close-knit community. The settlement now consisted of the Métis, the Scottish colonists, the Swiss mercenaries, and employees of the new Hudson’s Bay Company. It was an isolated and self-sufficient community, with little direct contact with the outside world until the late 1840s.

In 1821, the population was evenly divided between the Métis and the European colonists. However, by 1860, more than 80 percent of the population was Métis.

The economy of the Red River Valley revolved around the needs of the HBC. The Scottish settlers grew crops and sold the produce to the HBC. The Métis also farmed, but they contributed to the economy in other ways. The Métis bison hunt continued to provide both pemmican and hides, and many Métis worked as labourers, as crew on York boats, or as HBC clerks.



**FIGURE 4–22** Seasonal activities of the Métis in Red River. In what ways was the Métis way of life European? In what ways was it similar to that of the First Nations?

## Race and Social Class in Red River

In 1829, George Simpson took a leave from his duties as Governor-in-Chief of the HBC and travelled to England. Like most traders, Simpson had a Métis wife and several children. However, Simpson was to **turn off** his Métis wife and children. In fact, he predicted that the “fashion” of marrying Métis women would come to an end once European women began arriving in the Northwest. When Simpson left for England, his plan was to find an English bride.

Simpson’s choice was his 18-year-old cousin, Frances. In 1830, he brought her to Red River. Simpson was determined to “improve” the society in the Red River Settlement, which meant introducing well-born European women who would become the settlement’s new social elite.

Frances Simpson soon announced that she would not socialize with any of the Métis wives or relatives of HBC employees. In a small community, this was a foolish move. The Simpsons soon found themselves isolated, since there were actually few European women of Frances Simpson’s social class in Red River.

The biased and elitist attitude expressed by the Simpsons was very common outside the Northwest in the 19th century. In general, fur-trade society was exceptional in terms of its tolerance of racial and cultural differences, so it is little wonder that the Simpsons did not find their attempt at “improving” Red River society successful.

In the spring of 1832, the Simpsons’ infant son died. They both left the Red River Valley the following year, eventually settling in Montreal. While Simpson continued to travel during his work for the HBC, he never again lived in the Northwest.

**turn off** to leave behind a Métis wife and children or to replace a Métis wife with a European wife



**FIGURE 4–23** Frances Simpson was a teenager when she arrived in the Northwest, a land she called “romantic.” How do you think she might have felt when beginning her new role in Red River?



**FIGURE 4–24** In an isolated community such as the Red River Settlement, how would social structure affect people’s everyday lives? How do you think newcomers would have been treated?



## A Self-Sufficient Community



**FIGURE 4-25** A traditional wooden scythe. Heavy and awkward, it required a great deal of strength to use. Considering the location of the colony, how might new technology reach the people of Red River?

**bannock** a simple bread, fried or baked, consisting of flour, baking powder, and salt

**free trade** a system of trade that is not fully regulated by government control

Isolation from other colonies of British North America fostered a sense of self-reliance among the inhabitants of the Red River Settlement. Crop failures meant real hardship, and what we consider ordinary foods were often scarce. In 1834, one colonist recalled seeing a ripe tomato for the first time in 15 years. There was little variation in diet, especially in winter, when pemmican was the staple.

Life was physically demanding, primarily because most tasks had to be done by hand. For instance, both men and women used scythes to harvest the grain, and women performed the time-consuming task of cleaning, carding, and spinning wool for clothing. Women also did the cooking for their families, making **bannock** and other foods. Many Métis women, skilled in traditional medicine, acted as both midwives and health care specialists.

### “Le commerce est libre! Vive la liberté!”

As the 1840s progressed, Red River colonists began expanding into what is now North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. The Métis looked on these homesteaders as a market for many of their products, especially pemmican and buffalo robes, but they were forbidden to trade independently because of the HBC trade monopoly. Throughout the 1840s, an increasing number of Métis, believing they had a right to trade freely, began to deal with colonists regardless of HBC rules. In 1849, the matter came to a head when four Métis were charged with illegal trading, and one, Pierre Guillaume Sayer, was brought to trial.

When the trial began, the courtroom was packed, and more than 200 Métis surrounded the courthouse. The presiding judge was known to be hostile to French-speaking Métis and actually told the jury that they had no option but to find the defendant guilty—which they did—to the dismay of the angry crowd. The jury foreman quickly recommended mercy, and Sayer was freed, without penalty. Outside, the Métis proclaimed, “*Le commerce est libre! Vive la liberté!*” (“Business is open! Long live freedom!”) The HBC could no longer enforce its monopoly, and **free trade** became a fact of life in the Red River Valley.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Describe the attitudes of George and Frances Simpson toward the people of the Red River Settlement. What impact do you think these views had on the Simpsons and on the settlement as a whole?
2. What roles did women play in the daily life of the Red River Settlement? How did their lives compare with life for women colonists in Upper Canada?
3. How was the Sayer trial of 1849 a victory for the Métis?
4. Despite some significant conflict, the Red River Settlement was largely peaceful from 1821–1860. Give some reasons why this may have been so.

# Changes: The Red River Settlement from 1860–1870

## ► How would the arrival of newcomers be a turning point for the Red River Settlement?

The 1860s brought significant changes to the Red River Settlement. The fur trade and the influence of the HBC had declined, and more and more people began to move into the area, changing the balance of the population and bringing new cultures to the region.

It was the arrival of new colonists—especially those from the Canadas—that had the greatest impact. The quickly growing population of Canada West meant that most of the good farmland had been taken. By 1860, many Canadians were looking for new areas to farm. The Red River Valley, with its fertile soil and established community, was an appealing prospect.

## Rising Tensions

Most of the new arrivals in Red River were Protestant and members of the Orange Order, an anti-French, anti-Catholic movement. Not surprisingly, their arrival led to increasing racial tension in the Red River Settlement. The French Métis were discriminated against because of their language and Catholic religion, but the English-speaking Métis, many of whom were Protestant, were also discriminated against because of their First Nations heritage.

One of the first immigrants to arrive in 1861 was “Doctor” John Christian Schultz. Schultz had never completed his medical degree and had no intention of practising medicine. Instead, he opened a general store and took over the only newspaper in the settlement, the *Nor’Wester*. By the late 1860s, he had organized a small group of supporters into the “Canadian Party,” which he hoped would eventually gain political control of the colony. Schultz used the *Nor’Wester* as a platform for his anti-Métis views. Statements such as these only increased tension within the community:

*[The Métis], the indolent and the careless, like the native tribes of the country, will fall back before the march of superior intelligence.*

—John Christian Schultz

Economic problems during the 1860s also contributed to rising tensions at Red River. There were several crop failures, and the bison hunts were less successful than in earlier years. The HBC was also losing interest in the area.

### Did You Know...

According to an 1870 census of the Métis and Canadian populations of Manitoba, the Red River Settlement consisted of

- 5720 French Métis
- 4080 English Métis
- 2428 Canadians



**FIGURE 4–26** John Christian Schultz. How might his writings be viewed today?

## Canada Purchases Rupert's Land

### Did You Know...

Employees of the HBC had ownership of land they lived on and had farmed for at least three years. The Métis believed that if they cleared and farmed land, they owned it. However, there had been no legal survey of landholdings in the Red River Valley. Nor did the Métis possess “official” ownership of their land.

Politicians such as John A. Macdonald were interested in creating a Dominion of Canada, one that stretched from coast to coast. At the same time, the HBC realized that running Rupert's Land was becoming too expensive. The company decided to give up control of Rupert's Land.

Soon after Confederation, in 1867, the Canadian government and the HBC began negotiations to transfer control of Rupert's Land. The HBC did not consult those living in the Red River Settlement. Rumours regarding the deal soon began to circulate, and everyone was worried, especially the Métis.

In 1868, government surveyors arrived in the Red River Valley to survey the area. The surveyors assumed that the riverside farms of the Métis were not legally owned.

An agreement on the transfer of Rupert's Land was signed in November 1869. The Canadian government then joined Rupert's Land with the North-Western Territory, renaming the entire region the North-West Territories in 1870.



**FIGURE 4–27** Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory were joined together to become the North-West Territories in 1870. What would be the consequence of this change in the political landscape?

## ACTIVITIES

1. How did immigrants from Canada drastically change the composition of the population of the Red River Settlement between 1860 and 1870?
2. Discuss why both the Canadian government and the HBC might have ignored the interests of those living in the Red River Valley.

# The Red River Resistance

## ► After so many years of peace and cooperation, why did the Red River Settlement return to open conflict?

In 1868, a Métis named Louis Riel returned to Red River from Montreal, where he had been sent to be educated. He was now a lawyer, fluent in both French and English, and an excellent **orator**. Although just 24, he would soon take the role of a leader in what would become known as the **Red River Resistance**.

Tensions had been rising in Red River since the arrival of the surveyors. People were angry that the Hudson's Bay Company was selling Rupert's Land without consulting them and that the surveyors were ignoring their rights. Most felt that the Canadian government planned to take their land. Riel soon organized groups of Métis to observe the surveyors.

In October 1869, surveyors were seen on a Métis hay privilege. Riel was quickly sent for, and he arrived with a party of horsemen. They told the surveyors that they were trespassing, and one Métis stood on the surveyors' chain, stopping their work. The following week, Riel formed the **National Métis Committee** in order to fight for Métis rights, including the right to their land.

## The Provisional Government

John A. Macdonald had already appointed William McDougall as lieutenant governor of the North-West Territories, and the National Métis Committee's first act was to inform McDougall that he was not welcome. McDougall ignored them, and the next day, the National Métis Committee occupied Upper Fort Garry, seizing weapons and ammunition. Riel and the Métis were determined to fight, if necessary, for their rights.

Still, Riel and his supporters had no intention of rebelling against the government. In fact, they were not opposed to entering Confederation, as long as the rights of the people of Red River were protected. To ensure that the Métis would have a voice, Riel decided to set up a **provisional government**. This government would help maintain order and would give the people of Red River the power to negotiate an agreement to enter Confederation. Riel feared that if Lieutenant Governor McDougall, who was known to be strongly anti-French, had

**orator** an eloquent public speaker, able to inspire an audience

**Red River Resistance** events leading up to the Métis' attempt to achieve recognition of their rights and self-government; also known as the Red River Rebellion

**National Métis Committee** an organization formed to support Métis rights in the Red River Valley

**provisional government** a temporary government



**FIGURE 4-28** Louis Riel and members of the provisional government. Why was the formation of this government such an important event for the Red River Settlement?

complete control of the area, he would give all power to the Orange Order's Canadian Party.

John A. Macdonald decided to postpone the transfer of Rupert's Land until matters could be resolved. He sent a letter to McDougall, telling him to take no action. Before the letter arrived, however, McDougall crossed the border and proclaimed himself governor of the North-West Territories. He then quickly recrossed the border into the United States. Copies of McDougall's proclamation were soon circulated in the Red River Settlement.

Ironically, with the release of the proclamation, the authority of the HBC ceased, but because McDougall was in the United States, authority did not officially transfer to Canada. The letter he failed to receive held a warning from Macdonald:

*An assumption of the Government by you, of course, puts an end to that of the Hudson's Bay Company's authorities... There would then be, if you were not admitted into the Country, no legal government existing... it is quite open by the Law of Nations for the inhabitants to form a Government... for the protection of life & property, and such a Government has certain sovereign rights...*

—Sir John A. Macdonald to William McDougall, November 27, 1869

**sovereign rights** the right to form a government or country

Because of McDougall's mistake, Riel's provisional government was now, in fact, the legal government of the area, with “**sovereign rights**” and the right to negotiate with the Canadian government. Also, any actions that might be taken by the Canadian Party against Riel's government would be considered against the law.

## Riel Takes Action

Riel feared that the Canadian Party was already armed and prepared to take control of the Red River Settlement. In early December of 1869, he decided to act first. A party of armed Métis arrested John Schultz and 48 of his supporters, confining them in Upper Fort Garry.

Once the news reached Ottawa, John A. Macdonald sent Donald Smith, a senior official in the Hudson's Bay Company, to negotiate with Riel. However, Macdonald was considering other options:

*Smith goes to carry the olive branch. We must not think of military force until peaceable means have been exhausted. Should these miserable half-breeds not disband, they must be put down.*

—Sir John A. Macdonald

Smith arrived in Red River in January 1870. Eventually he and Riel agreed that the provisional government should send negotiators to Ottawa. In the meantime, Schultz and some of his men had escaped from Upper Fort Garry and had tried to free the remaining prisoners. The Métis stopped them, capturing several members of the raiding party, including a man named Thomas Scott, who was later executed by Riel.

While many people regretted what happened with Thomas Scott, this event marked the end of the threat of war between the Métis and the Canadian Party. By the end of the month, a delegation including both Métis and members of the Canadian Party left for Ottawa in a more optimistic mood. They were on their way to negotiate the creation of the province of Manitoba.

## Zoom In ➤ The Trial and Execution of Thomas Scott

Thomas Scott was born in northern Ireland and settled in Red River in late 1869. Scott was known to be a difficult person, hot headed and prone to violence. He aggressively voiced his anti-Métis views, believing that white people were superior.

Scott had a deep, personal dislike for Louis Riel. Recaptured with other members of the raiding party, Scott became impossible to handle. Accounts show that he spent most of his time hurling insults at his guards, and he threatened to kill Riel once he was released. The abuse was so distasteful that even his fellow prisoners asked that Scott be put in a separate cell.

By early March, the guards' patience was exhausted. After a physical assault by Scott, they demanded that Riel take action.

On March 3, 1870, Scott went on trial for treason. After calling a number of witnesses, the board concluded that Scott was guilty and, by a majority vote, passed the sentence of death by firing squad. On March 4, Scott was executed. This action would have profound implications for the Métis and Louis Riel, even though many agreed that Scott's behaviour was his downfall.

- If you had been part of the board that determined Scott's fate, what questions would you have asked to help determine his innocence or guilt?



**FIGURE 4–29** The trial and execution of Thomas Scott was big news in Canada. What feelings might the picture evoke in an audience? Why would a newspaper choose to show this image?

*There is no doubt that he [Scott] would have been spared and let out when we were, had he behaved himself.*

—George Sanderson, member of the Canadian Party

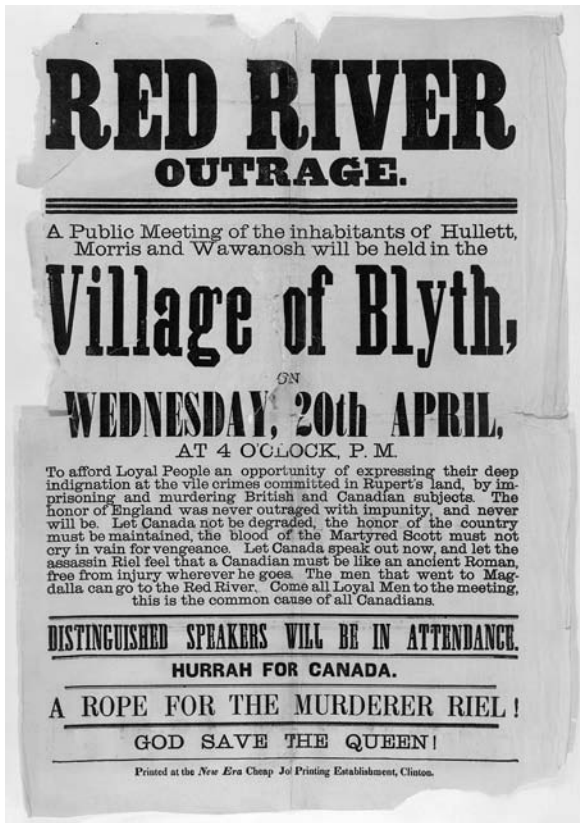
## Manitoba Is Created

Unfortunately, John Schultz reached Ontario before the official Métis delegation. He had quickly whipped up a wave of violent anti-French, anti-Catholic, and anti-Métis hysteria. Thomas Scott was depicted as a Protestant martyr, cruelly murdered at the hands of the “evil” Louis Riel.

By the time the Red River delegation arrived in Ottawa, Ontario was in an uproar, and John A. Macdonald, who had already expressed anti-Métis sentiments, proved a difficult negotiator. He refused to allow provincial control of public lands, but he did offer a compromise: a grant of 200 000 hectares to the “children of the Métis.” On May 12, 1870, legislation creating the province of Manitoba was passed by the House of Commons.

Still, Macdonald had to show his support of the calls for justice from Ontario. He dispatched a force of 1200 militia (many of them members of the Orange Order) to Red River, under the command of Colonel Wolseley. He instructed Wolseley to keep the peace until the transfer of power to the provincial government was complete. He also made it clear that the force was not to treat Riel or his followers as a legitimate government.

Ironically, Riel *was* the leader of a legitimate government—even in the words of Macdonald himself, in his letter to McDougall quoted on page 158. When Wolseley’s force finally reached the Red River in late August, Riel had fled the area. He feared, with justification, that his life was in danger. Eventually, all members of the provisional government were granted an amnesty by the Canadian government—all except Louis Riel, who remained in exile in the United States.



**FIGURE 4-30** An anti-Riel poster, 1870. What sort of sentiments are expressed here? How does this compare to the image of the execution of Thomas Scott?

## ACTIVITIES

1. John A. Macdonald was in the Orange Order, yet he worked and was friends with French-speaking Catholics—people the Orange Order considered inferior. How do you explain Macdonald’s position? How might the Orange Order have influenced his decisions about Riel and the Métis?
2. Evaluate key incidents in the Red River Resistance. What might have happened if Scott had not been executed? With a partner, discuss this question and share your findings with the class.
3. Summarize the main events that led Macdonald to dispatch 1200 militia to Red River.

The Métis List of Rights, agreed to by the Convention of the Red River Settlement on March 22, 1870, is an important Canadian document. It later became the base of the Manitoba Act, and reflected the concerns of those living in the Red River.

- As you read through the document, consider how it is similar to excerpts from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms on the following page. Classify your findings according to the five themes in the Charter (Fundamental Freedoms, Democratic Rights, etc.).

1. That the people have the right to elect their own Legislature.
2. That the Legislature have the power to pass all laws local to the Territory over the veto of the Executive by a two-thirds vote.
3. That no act of the Dominion Parliament (local to the territory) be binding on the people until sanctioned [approved] by the Legislature of the Territory.
4. That all Sheriffs, Magistrates, Constables, School Commissioners, and so on, be elected by the people.
5. A free Homestead and preemption Land Law.
6. That a portion of the public lands be appropriated for the benefit of Schools, the building of Bridges, Roads and Public Buildings.
7. That it be guaranteed to connect Winnipeg by Rail with the nearest line of Railroad, within a term of five years; the land grant to be subject to the Local Legislature.
8. That for the term of four years all Military, Civil and Municipal expenses be paid out of Dominion funds.
9. That the Military be composed of inhabitants now existing in the Territory.
10. That the English and French languages be common in the Legislature and Courts, and that all Public Documents and Acts of the Legislature be published in both languages.
11. That the Judge of the Supreme Court speak the English and French languages.
12. That Treaties be concluded and ratified between the Dominion Government and the several tribes of Indians in the Territory to ensure peace on the frontier.
13. That we have a fair and full representation in the Canadian Parliament.
14. That all privileges, customs and usages existing at the time of transfer be respected.



The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was entrenched as part of the Canadian Constitution under the terms of the Constitution Act, 1982. Here are some excerpts.

### Fundamental Freedoms

- Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: (a) freedom of conscience and religion; (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication; (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and (d) freedom of association.

### Democratic Rights

- Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and the right to be qualified for membership therein.

### Legal Rights

- Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.
- Everyone has the right to be secure against unreasonable search or seizure.
- Everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.
- Everyone has the right on arrest or detention (a) to be informed promptly for the reasons therefore; (b) to retain and instruct counsel without delay and to be informed of that right; and (c) to have the validity of the detention determined by way of **habeas corpus** and to be released if the detention is not lawful.
- Everyone has the right not to be subjected to any cruel and unusual treatment or punishment.

### Equality Rights

- Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

### Official Languages of Canada

- (1) English and French are the official languages of Canada and have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and government of Canada.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

- How are the two documents similar and dissimilar? Consider the reasons for the creation of each document.
- What can the Métis List of Rights tell us about the Métis resistance?

**habeas corpus** requiring that the lawfulness of a person's arrest or detention be investigated by a judge or court

# Explore the Big Ideas

The fur trade, and the people who were part of it, played a significant role in the development of the Northwest. Fur-trading companies, such as the HBC and the NWC, were big players in an industry that affected both the land and the people of the region. One of the most important results of the fur trade was the contact between First Nations and European fur traders. This contact led to the emergence of the Métis, who played a role in the creation of Manitoba.

1. How did conflict and cooperation change the Northwest? Use an organizer like the one below to explore the changing relationships between the fur traders, the First Nations, and the Métis.

Time Period	Groups Involved	Examples of Interaction/Turning Points
Fur trade before 1812		
Selkirk Settlement, 1812–1821		
Red River Settlement, 1821–1860		
Immigration into Red River, 1860–1869		
Red River Resistance, 1869–1870		
Aftermath		

2. Examine the impact of the fur trade on the First Nations and Métis of the Northwest.
  - a) In a class debate, discuss this question: Was the fur trade harmful to the First Nations of the Northwest?
  - b) As a class, discuss and record the contributions of Aboriginal peoples to the fur trade. How did these contributions influence the development of Canada? Create a cause/event/consequence chart to explore this issue further.
3. Was the violent conflict that erupted over the Red River Valley avoidable? Suggest how the conflict could have been avoided during the creation of the Selkirk Settlement.
4. You are a resident of the Red River Settlement in 1870. Thomas Scott was executed yesterday. In a poem, letter, cartoon, or picture, describe your feelings about this key event. You could take the viewpoint of a Métis, a colonist, or a member of the Orange Order.
5. Create a compare and contrast chart to show the similarities and differences between the life of a Métis teenager in the mid-1800s to that of a teenager today. Use the Window on Canada (pages 150–151) and other information in this chapter to complete your chart.
6. What was the most significant event in terms of First Nations, Métis, and European Canadian relations? Justify your thinking with specific details from the text and your own research.
7. Choose one of the conflicts explored in this chapter. Was the conflict inevitable? Was the outcome just? Explain.